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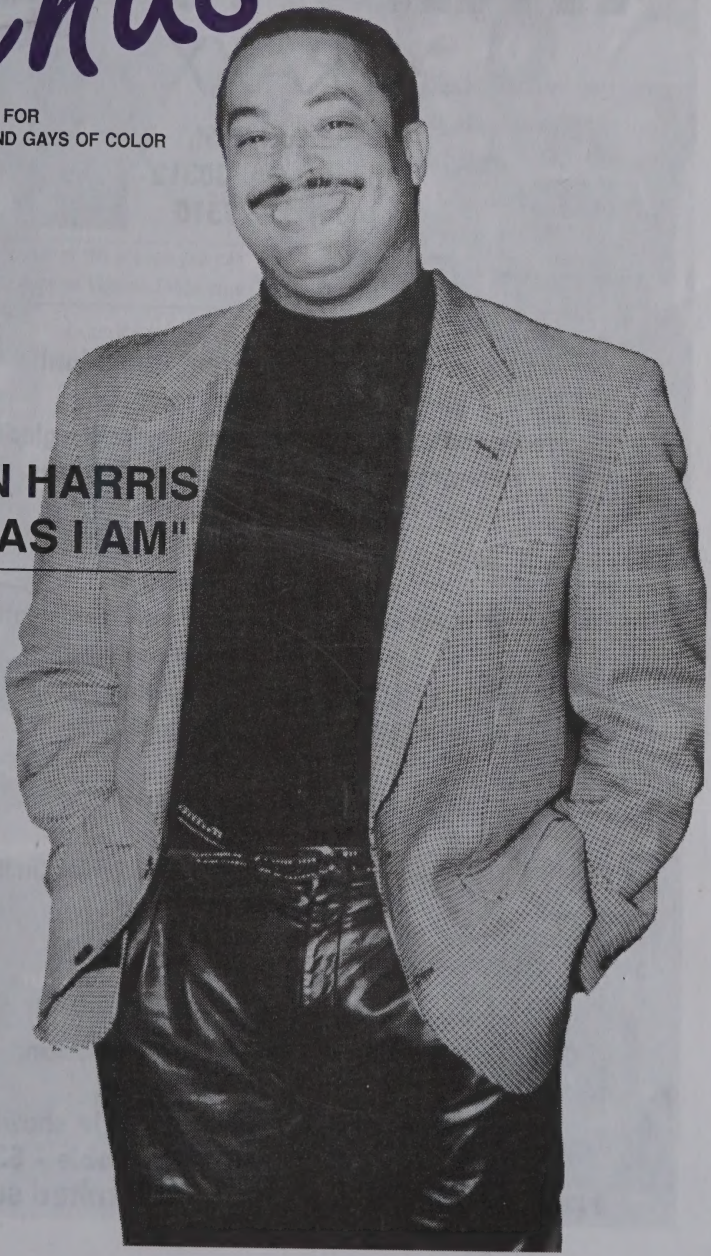

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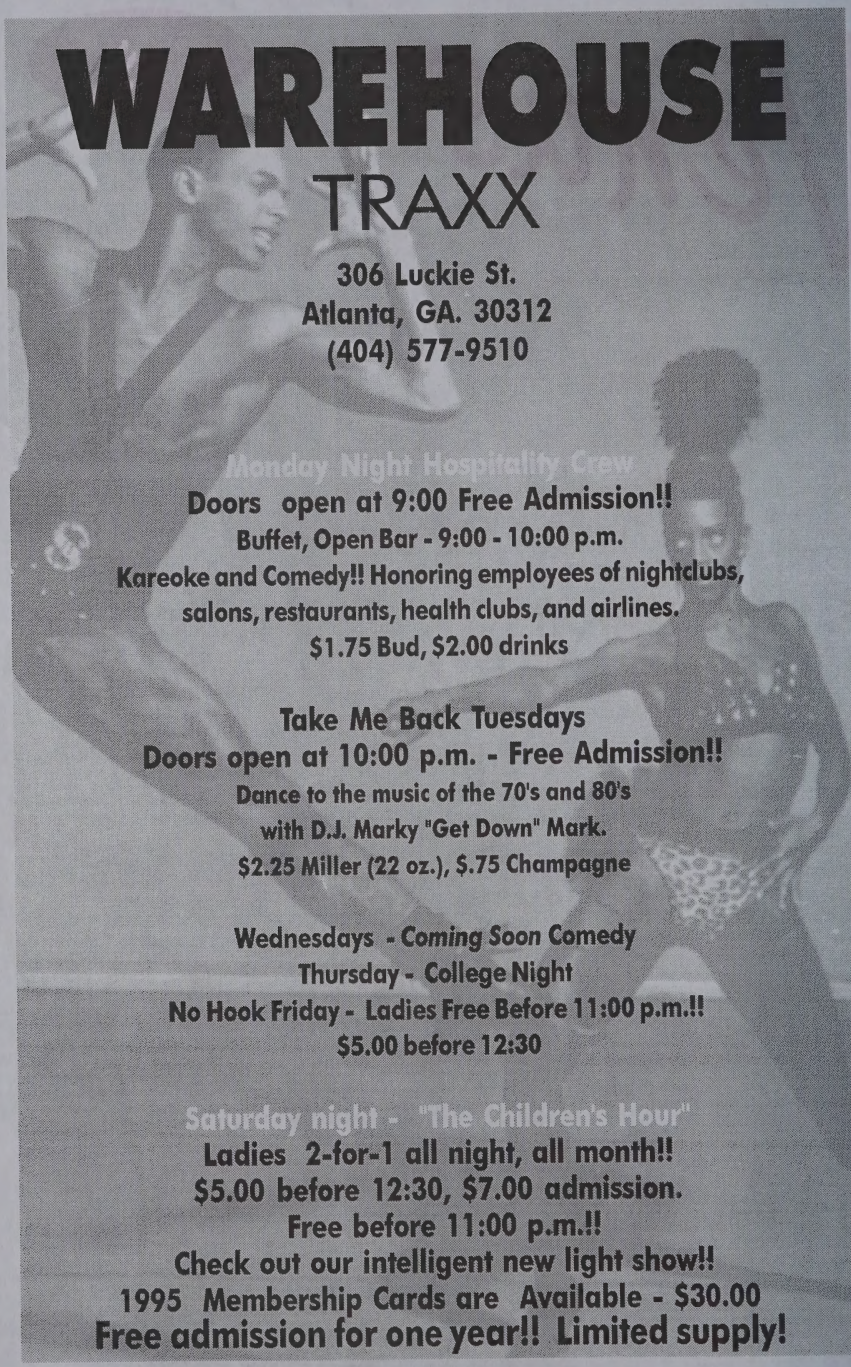
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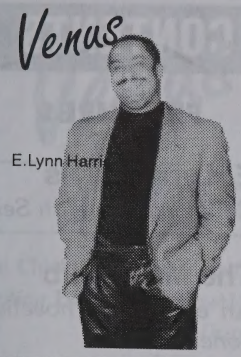

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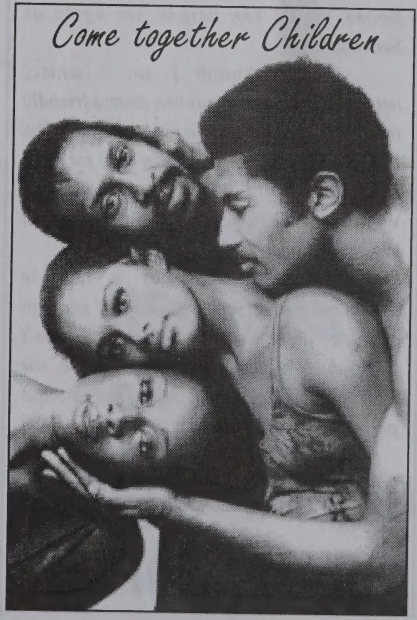
EDITOR'S NOTES

Timing is everything!

To be black, lesbian, gay, drag, spiritual, intelligent, successful, independent, and full of talent is to be YOU. To be you and HAVE a true voice in this community is to be AWESOME. For every awesome black gay organization to come together, well that's POWER.

It's that time.

Editor in Chief
Charlene Cothran



LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Thank you so much for publishing a magazine of substance and quality. You are right on time and target with your publication. As a college professor, I am proud to write to you and say that your magazine is very inspirational, touching and informative.

I pride myself on being one of your subscribers and again, congratulations for "Coming of Age".

Victoria Onasis

Greetings,

Just prior to her death, my life touched briefly and tangentially the life of Venus Landin. We worked together at Oxford Books, and I ran across her again at Sevanada.

Even though I am a white, heterosexual male, Venus was always friendly to, and interested in, me, as a person. She was not just acting nice. She was for real, and I knew it. I liked her very, very much. We used to share ribald commentary and laugh together.

Because she was a humble unpretentious person, and did not pack an attitude, there were many things I didn't know about her while she lived. To me, she was just a genuinely good person without prejudice, whom I liked and enjoyed.

Phillipe D'Angelo Van de Graff

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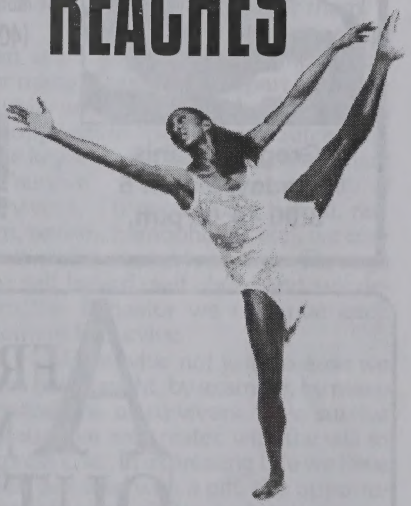

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SPIRITUALITY

CONFIDENCE AND A MADE UP MIND

by Kamau Ifoma

A history of oppression, denial, injustice and abuse has been the greatest detriment to people of color. We have listened so long to what we cannot do that we have very little confidence in what we can do. It is this lack of confidence, not racism, hatred, lack of education or social injustice that creates the greatest deterrent to our progress. One of the best kept secrets in life is when children of God make up their minds, when they bring their minds into harmony with the desire in their hearts, when they pray for and follow intuitive guidance; then no one and nothing can stop them - no matter what color they may be. Confidence and a made up mind are the stuff Kings and Queens are made of.

"Acts of Faith"
by Iyanla Vanzant

Confidence and a made up mind are instruments of unconditional love. They are the tools used by an individual who knows who and whose he/she is. Individuals who have found, through much growth and development, perfect peace within themselves. They are not concerned about how others perceive them. Their confidence comes from the awareness that THEIR LIFE is a divine, unique and unrepeatable creation. Out of this confidence comes the made-up mind to live every moment as though it is created just for them.

I understand how this concept can seem impossible and improbable for many of you. We are part of a community who has survived a long history of oppression, bigotry and outcasting. The key term in the previous statement is "survive". We are a community of survivors. Through all the hatred, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., we continue each moment to survive. Through the self hatred, self abuse and self destructive behavior we continue each moment to survive.

We survive not just because we have been taught, by example, by many generations of survivors. We survive because we are created with the will to express Life. In expressing Life we have been provided with a gift, the opportunity to choose, define and perceive exactly what life is. The gift is an opportunity that we take for granted. We consistently allow others to label and define us. In doing so we actually give to others the power to create us. By claiming for ourselves who and whose we are then we become the creators of our world. We are no longer bound by the labels of those who wish to control and imprison us. We are now free to BE exactly what we are created to BE.

Through this process of learning to define our own existence we must reclaim the power which we have given away. Most often we give our power away very innocently, generally out of

loyalty, to those who genuinely love and respect us. They can be our families, churches, friends, employers. They request that we live by their rules because they think they know what is best for us. They are generally sincere in their concern for us. BUT because they don't walk in our shoes, nor we in their's, they can only guess at what is best for us as we can only guess at what is best for them. They were not put in our lives to interpret how life "should" be expressed through us.

No one can do this better for us than us. Your parents can only teach from their experience. Your church or religious affiliation can only provide you with a teaching as they understand it. Your friends can only be an example for you through their own choices. It is by your power, confidence and a made-up mind that your life finds its meaning. YOU are the interpreter of your world.

Always remember that we are Spiritual Beings first! As you use your creative power to define and create, why not create a world where you are special and divine. A world where you always come first. A world where no one determines who you are. Create a world where your love for yourself overrides all the "isms" which have, up to this time, held you in bondage. Create the world which Your Creator intended just for you. And since Your Creator said is OK for you to be black, male or female or transperson, gay or lesbian or bisexual then it makes no sense for you to allow someone else to overrule Your Creator. Through confidence and a made-up mind allow yourself to express just as Your Creator intended for only you to express. "I AM A SPIRITUAL BEING, CREATING THE WORLD IN WHICH MY CREATOR INTENDED JUST FOR ME. IT IS A WORLD OF PEACE, HAPPINESS AND ABOVE ALL UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. WELCOME TO MY WORLD!"

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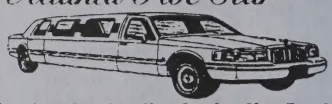

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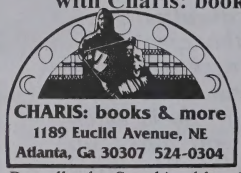

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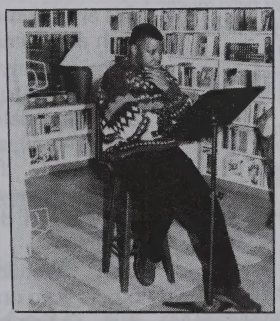
THE MALE CLUB: *An Indoctrination*

An excerpt from the forthcoming novel
by Douglas E. Jones

When I was young I used to dream in vivid technicolor, unwittingly, foolishly enamored of hamsters, dinosaurs, and anything that flew. I used to dream little black boy dreams of skinned knees and skateboards, dream dreams of bottle-top scaly on tar-topped streets and stoop ball on the front steps of brownstones. I would dream of little black girls in corn rows and pigtails, double-dutching and hop-scotching their way through glass-littered Brooklyn streets. Back then life was summertime, even in the winter, and, had anyone tried, it would have been hard to tell me otherwise, to show me where my dreams had begun to fade to nightmares, summertime fast becoming my life's blizzard.

It took several years of moving from one neighborhood to the next, but my parents finally settled us in a huge, weathered brownstone on the tree lined streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mom and Dad were southern folks, part of that generation who reached beyond the horrors of strange fruit swaying from weeping trees: they had migrated north on the hopes of their parents and the promises of a not-so-distant future. Were Pop a different sort of man, he might've buckled under the weight of a reality which couldn't afford his dreams; instead he hustled his way through college on a basketball scholarship and an iron will, making sure dreams were the realities toward which his family could reach. And, perhaps it was the nature of her character or the force of her will that made Mom a phenomenon too early to be fully appreciated, but at a time when high school was still an achievement for most of us, Mom had finished her post undergraduate degree. She had that unique ability to make one yearn for the stars while anchoring firmly on earth. Little black boy dreaming, growing up on tree lined streets in Brooklyn, life was good to me and my memories of those first days are fond, full of piggyback rides, temper tantrums and a new bike each Christmas.



The arrival of my brother was an event which caused conflicting emotions: Joy at the responsibility of being an older brother, of providing an example to this bundle of wonder who would depend on me, but horror at the immediacy and abruptness of the moment in which my parents required that I grow up. It was suddenness which spoke of the gradual potential of new hopes, the possibilities of unfulfilled dreams, and the immense pitfalls of our humanity - children and parents alike - to which we are all susceptible. A suddenness complicated by the confusion of child's wants and his parents' dreams. While my parents tried not to usher my brother and I into the realm of their dreams, it was their unconscious recognition of these dreams that reflected back to them in the face of my brother and left me isolated and lonely on an island called home. And it was that loneliness, that isolation, the reflection of my brother and the persistence of their dreams which pressed down on me, weighed in on my consciousness and fueled the potency of my nightmares, questioning my worth and the supposed limitations my life offered.

Sex was more an assumed conversation rather than an obvious issue in my family: discussion on the topic between my Father and I always involved obscure situations and distant language commenting on the potential between myself and whomever I was calling girlfriend at the moment. Mother's advice was to sheath whatever desire was stirring in my pants - I was not yet ready for the potential responsibility. Between the two of them teen pregnancy avoidance was the goal and, sensing the awkwardness of those superficial conversations, I never let on that my desire lay elsewhere.

The developing nightmare which scared me the most, settled me into the deepest, most wintry part of my life, was a peculiar fascination with other boys. The fascination was even more profound than the discovery I made while drying myself one morning: Through some mysterious combination of rhythm and speed, with alternating amounts of pressure, I had elicited, from within the constraints of my loins, an extraordinary amount of pleasure, ending up collapsed and breathless across the washer machine. The experience preoccupied me for the better part of a week before my parochial school education informed me that this was self-manipulation (Actually, masturbation) for which the penalty was an eternity in hell (actually, the remote possibility of calluses to either participating member was the worst of it). So, too, it informed me, was the penalty for my preoccupation with other boys, but neither circumstance was ever part of their assumptions in conversations with my parents.

By the time I was a Junior in high school, I managed to perfect the daily mechanics necessary to stay alive. Black boy, not-so-little, growing up on the tree lined streets of Brooklyn, there was no one with whom I could talk, no where to turn, and it became increasingly difficult to live with myself. Somehow, I negotiated the nightmares, my life gaining in momentum as I successfully avoided myself, staying just a step ahead of self-destruction, managing, for a time, to escape impending doom. But the summertime had faded and winter settled, the blizzard of my life complete. So, I did what my parochial school education - salvation, I thought - advised: Will it out of existence - any way you could. Pray for forgiveness. Hard. Subject closed.

I didn't expect for it to come back.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...

So tell us - What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

My lover and I have been in a long distance relationship for four years. She lives thousands of miles away and comes to visit twice a year. She has always been very good to me. She insists on paying my rent and bills, in an attempt to control things. However I often become restless while she's away. I love her very much but I'm wondering is it wrong to have my sexual desires taken care of by another while she's away?

Signed Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,

No wonder you are frustrated! In order to answer your direct question, I must first comment on some stressors that are glaringly apparent in the context of this question.

Firstly, it is, AT BEST, difficult to have a short-term distant relationship. Four years in this type of relationship would be extremely trying. Coupled with the fact that on average you see this person once every six months is certainly not conducive to the soil which would blossom the strength and healthiness of a solid, long lasting relationship.

For couples, many issues and obstacles must be hurdled. And many wants, needs, and goals must be responded to by the relationship. The opportunity to meet many of these tasks is not available with distance. This only occurs, in its fullest, through the process of ongoing constant interaction. Granted, distance is an obstacle in itself, but must not be the primary task or FOUNDATION of the relationship.

This brings up certain questions. What is the nature and type of this relationship? What is the understanding which this couple have agreed upon? And, why has this couple found this arrangement to be so bearable for such an extended period?

At any rate, with this in mind, I will attempt to say here that if you have an open relationship, (not exclusively one-on-one), sex with others IS usually permitted. If, however, you have a closed, monogamous relationship, it is usually NOT desirable to have sex with others.

Wanting and fantasizing about others is an ongoing human characteristic. Acting on these desires and fantasies, if the agreement is monogamy, can be extremely detrimental to the relationship.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089

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SAINTS & 'AINTS

Between you and me and the gate post, the churches in Cotsville got more 'aints than saints. If Jesus happen to come back one of these old Sunday mornings, he'd do better dropping by the tavern than trying to find a friend in any one of the sanctuaries in this town.

It ain't good to talk about folks, but the truth is, everybody shouting and saying "Amen", ain't got no God in 'em.

At First Bible Way Baptist, the hypocriting got so bad, Missionary Porter had to change her affiliation 'fore she lost her religion. It all come to a head one Sunday morning after the benediction. The right Reverend Obadiah Wilson had just preached an almighty love-your-neighbor sermon and everybody was feeling the fire. I mean even Mary and Lou who had just joined Missionary Porter for that Sunday service found themselves rocking and reeling when Reverend Obadiah brought the message. At one point Mary lost herself and screamed, "Preach the Word!!!" Lou blushed with embarrassment as everyone turned and looked in their direction. Missionary patted Lou's hand and said, "Let the Lord have his way."

And He did. You had to see Clovis Jr., who got so happy he stretched forth his arms and knocked a hole in the just plastered wall where the choir sits. Cleveretta whispered to Teresa how "all that wasn't necessary", but everybody in Cotsville knows that Clovis Jr. don't have no sense when it comes to praising God. Even Missionary Porter remembers when First Bible Way Baptist went to visit its sister church in Scarsboro. They were singing "Near the Cross" and when they got to that part about finding peace beyond the river, Clovis Jr. stood up and stretched forth

his arms and fell backwards knocking down every folding chair that was standing, shouting, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", as he dropped. The pastor, Reverend Rayford Greenfield, didn't appreciate it either., but before the members could set the chairs back up good, Clovis Jr. fell out a second time. "THANK YA!!!!!!!"

This Sunday was no different. Didn't a soul flinch when his fist went through the wall. The organ didn't stop nor the piano. The saints kept giving God their wave praises and the 'aints, like Cleveretta, whispered their criticisms. "I dont't see why a man got to have his hair straightened and curled like that. While he' 'hooping and hollaring, I wonder who he think he gonna fix that wall", Cleveretta fumed. "His hair look better than mine", Teresa added pulling her wig down to cover her nappy kitchen which had been showing for most of the service.

Mother Martha, who didn't like to say nothing wrong on nobody, was down right disgusted with Clovis Jr. He looked right female in his choir robe. When it came tome to lead the song, he flapped his arms and bent and swayed like he had rubber in his body. "Sugar in his blood", Mother Martha was known to remark every week. Missionary Porter patted Martha's shoulder every chance she got and said, "just bless him, he's really so sweet."

Clovis Jr. wasn't thinking about Martha, Mary or John; he had his mind stayed on Jesus and that new male member that recently joined the choir. Michael Kincaid, who had just moved to Cotsville from St. Louie, was a fine, strapping young man. He dressed in fashion style and his cologne stank so good he could have got up in that choir even if he didn't sing like a sparrow. This very Sunday when Clovis Jr. thought about the dinner he'd be having with this just joined choir member after service, he reared back and stretched out with joy and when he came to himself he was pulling his fist out of the new plastered wall where the choir sits. Wasn't nothing to say but, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", and he said or two or three times, right loudly.

This particular Sunday morning, with Mary and Lou in the pews and Reverend Obadiah sho nuff preaching the word, Missionary Porter was sitting gap-legged caught up in the spirit and had no intention of losing her grace, but the stare in the faces and the whispering simmering around her brought her back to reality. Sometimes she wanted to grab folks and shake the stew outta them for being so hateful, but she promised to hold her peace and let the Lord fight her battles a long time ago and she wasn't about to backslide for no imps of the devil, not this Lord's day morning.

The hypocriting got started soon after Reverend Obadiah's heartfelt: "Let the Lord watch between me and thee, while we're absent from one another, Let all God's people say AMEN." Gardenia and Magnolia, the flowers twin daughters, happen to circle after service with Cleveretta, Teresa, and Mother Martha. Missionary knew something was wrong the way all of them kept up their stare on Mary and Lou. Lou noticed it, too, and stuck her hands deep in her pockets. Mary hardly saw anything at first; she was so busy

collecting all the hugs, kisses and praise-the Lords from the other saints. The mess really started when Lou went to help Mary on with her jacket.

"See that!', Martha say.

"It's a 'bomination, I tell ya", Gardenia fumed.

"Seem to me the two of them need to get outta Cotsville and take Clovis Jr. wit 'em!", Mother Martha suggested; her whole body tightening as she spoke.

"I can't see it for the life of me what one woman want with another", Cleveretta whispered.

Teresa say, lifting up the side of her wig to scratch a persistent itch, "I bet Lou is the man when they get together."

Cleveretta say, "She look like she make a good man."

"What you say?", Mother Martha said, her bones cracking as she turned Cleveretta's way. "I'm gonna rebuke that demon, right now!"

"I....I....I mean she look....Lord deliver me." Cleveretta shut her eyes with shame.

Missionary Porter just wished they would all keep their mind on the Lord and out of folks' business, but they didn't know how. Their curiosity and fear gave them a fever. They had to figure things out. All of them stood for a long time yapping, trying to find the answer for why Mary and Lou could set foot in First Bible Way Baptist when everybody in Cotsville knew they was living like a husband and a wife in their mobile home just up the road near where the train runs.

Mother Martha strutted over, the feather in her large Sunday hat flickering nervously with each step.

"Bless His name, Missionary, and how you girls doing? Reverend sho preached this morning, didn't he?"

"Sho did!", Missionary exclaimed. "I'm glad my girls came with me this morning."

"I see the two of y'all still together."

"Always gonna be", Lou blurted angrily.

"Come on back anytime; there's always room at the cross. Jesus saves, you know."

With that Mother Martha turned around and went. Lou's face got red and Mary's smile began to fade. Gardenia and Magnolia snickered while Cleveretta and Teresa nudged each other in satisfaction.

Missionary Porter was disturbed. "Sometimes the folks in Cotsville was as backwards as a jackass", she thought. She grabbed Mary with one hand and Lou with the other and led them quickly out the church door. There was a quiet between them. Mary never let her tears fall. Lou's head pounded with the anger and Missionary studied what to say.

"Let me tell you something about church folks, little girls. Y'all still my girls, ain't ya?"

Even Lou managed to nod yes.

"Margaret learned me that there's many folks in church, but the church ain't in them. See that Martha, with the feather in her hat? She wouldn't get into heaven if her daddy owned it

and them other four, they so heavenly bound they ain't no earthly good."

The sun was shining so bright, the warmth soothed their bodies as they stood holding hands on the stone steps of First Bible Way Baptist.

"Y'all girls remember what I told you about Margaret how she learned me many things. For 15 years she was my teacher and I studied real good under her. Me and Margaret wasn't always welcomed every where we went either. Being two women caught up like that, not everybody accepted us.

There's gonna be many Marthas along your way. We just overcome them with our testimony.

Margaret told me one she preferred sinners to saints and I ask her why. She say, "You always know where you stand with a sinner; you can trust a sinner, but not a saint. They'll lie to you in Jesus name and forsake you, too. A sinner usually mean what he say about you."

Now don't you girls go thinking that the church belong to them , it don't. It belong to you. You got a purer heart.

You know sometimes I miss Margaret. Especially when I don't know what to say. It was the funniest thing. After Jesus, she was the greatest blessing of my life."

Lou was still down right agitated. Even the sun couldn't ease her too far down. Mary tried to cover her saddness by looking away up the road near the tracks where their mobile home sat.

They all better be lucky that it was Sunday, and God was a good God, and that Lou had some respect for Missionary Porter or there might have been a scandal in that sanctuary. Lou is known to act out, especially when it comes to Mary and the love she had for her. Many a time, Mary had to pull Lou in the other direction to keep her from tearing someone's behind out the frame.

Missionary Porter felt the heat of Lou's temper. "Girls, we gonna find ourselves another church. We can't stay here no more. Something wrong when the saints miss the mark. Margaret would say, "Don't get wrapped up." I think we'd do better if we just forgive them for they know not what they do and go over to the Shoney's and eat at the buffet. They got a waiter there name Lee who'll take care of us real good."

And descending them stone stairs, they did just that. Far as anybody knows, Mary, Lou, nor Missionary Porter ain't never set foot up in First Bible Way Baptist Church from that day to this even when they were invited for the usher board fish fry by the right Reverend Obadiah Wilson himself. And they never say a mumbling word about the 'aints that still go there to shout "Hallelujah!"

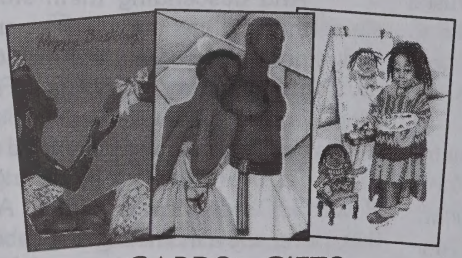
Noted playwright Dr. Shirlene Holmes, is Assistant Professor of Communic-ations at Georgia State University. "Saints & 'Aints" is taken from her collection of 'Cotsville Stories'.

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Tonya Poteat

Age: 25
Hometown: Hawriver, N.C.
Last Book Read: Stone Butch Blues, by Lesly Feinberg
Career: Physician's Assistant
Status: Committed forever

A self described "nerd", Tonya enjoys reading and the mystique of traveling to small towns just to look around.



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RECIPES

By Lois A. Grant

Spring: A Time for Change

As the first signs of spring appear our minds are filled with thoughts of lighter clothing and lighter meals. Today there is a theory that eating fewer calories can increase our longevity. However, when we reduce our caloric intake, we must be sure that we are getting the nutrients our bodies need in order to maintain a healthy life-style. A menu make-over occurs when you take traditional favorites, reduce the amount of calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium and still produce a meal that is tasty and delicious. Presented below is a sample of a menu make-over.

VEGETABLE LASAGNA

2 cups broccoli flowerets
1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
1 cup thinly sliced yellow squash
1 cup thinly sliced carrot
Vegetable cooking spray
1 1\2 cups thinly sliced fresh mushrooms
1 cup chopped onion
3 cups no-salt-added tomato sauce
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon dried basil
3\4 o 1 teaspoon pepper
1\2 teaspoon salt
1 (16 ounce) carton 1% low-fat cottage cheese
1\2 cup frozen egg substitute, thawed
8 cooked lasagna noodles (cooked without salt or fat)
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Arrange first 4 ingredients in a vegetable steamer over boiling water. Cover and steam 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender; drain. Transfer to a bowl; set aside.

Coat a nonstick skillet with cooking spray. Place skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add mushrooms and onion; saute until tender. Add to broccoli mixture.

Combine tomato sauce and next 5 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well. Combine cottage cheese and egg substitute, stirring well.

Spread 1\2 cup tomato sauce mixture over bottom of a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Place 4 lasagna noodles evenly over vegetable mixture. Top with remaining 4 noodles and remaining tomato sauce mixture.

Cover and bake at 350 degreesfor 40 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake, uncovered, an additional 10 minutes or until cheese melts. Let lasagna stand 15 minutes before serving. Yield: 8 servings.

PER SERVING: 234 cal, 3.6g fat, cholesterol 10mg, and sodium 500mg.

Traditional Vegetable Lasagna

PER SERVING: 580 cal, 27g fat, cholesterol 59mg, and sodium 1,365mg.

BANANA PUDDING

2 cups cold 2% low-fat milk
1 1.4 ounce package fat-free, sugar free instant Jello vanilla pudding
16 vanilla wafers
1 large banana
1 cup Cool Whip Lite

Mix milk and pudding according to directions on the box. Line 4 1\2 cup (4 ounce) pyrex dishes (or other 4 ounce bowls) with 2 vanilla wafers, then place 4 thin slices of banana on top of the wafers. Repeat layers with 2 vanilla wafers and 4 thin slices of banana.

Spoon pudding mixture over the banana slices shaking the dish so the pudding flows to the bottom. Fill pudding to about 1\4 inch from the rim of the bowl.

Place 2 tablespoons each of Cool Whip on top of the pudding spread until it covers the pudding, making peaks in the Cool Whip to give it height and beauty. Serves 4.

PER SERVING: 245 cal, 1.5g fat, 10mg chol, 60mg sodium

Traditional banana pudding

PER SERVING: 463 cal, 3g fat, 20mg chol, 410mg sodium

Notice the difference in changing just one meal to a heart healthy meal can make. The total reductions were 830 cal, 36.9g fat, 79mg chol, 410mg sodium. So go out and buy yourself a good light or low-calorie cookbook and start by preparing one meal daily using their recipes and you will be able to see a difference in both the way you look and feel. To get even better results, about one hour after you have finished that wonderful meal, go for a brisk 20 minute walk. Talk about living! Be well and enjoy life to the fullest. Happy Eating!

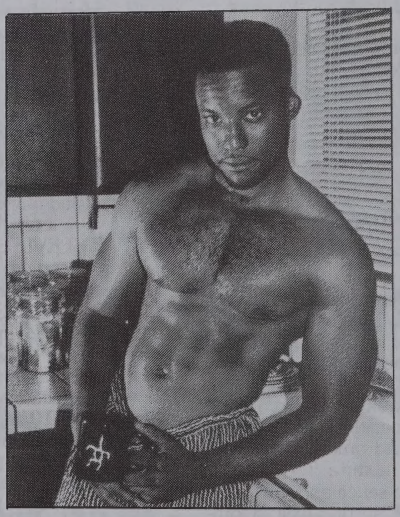
Next Month: Let's Celebrate Easter!

Lois A Grant, B.S., Food Service Management. Former Catering Culinary Instructor. Owner, Grant Foodservices Unlimited.

HEALTH

10 GUARANTEED WAYS TO STAY ON YOUR DIET

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's been munching through winter and fall? If the man in your mirror looks like this guy, then you certainly don't have a problem. If you, like most of us, have been eating your way through the abundance of cold, gray skies, then ten sure fire ways to improve your image are as welcome as thoughts of spring time and the warmth of a sunny day.



The key to staying on any "diet" is to learn to fight those food cravings that lead us directly to the refrigerator searching for left over macaroni and cheese and pound cake. These evil temptations wreak havoc on our most admirable dieting efforts. But fear not: Cravings may be powerful, but they can be overcome. Following are ten proven ways to curb the urge to munch out!

1) Drown you appetite: Drinking generous amounts of water is the number one way to reduce your appetite. Because oceans of water takes up lots of space in your stomach, you'll feel full, which will reduce your urge to eat. Aim to take sixty-four ounces of fluid a day, sipping on a three or four ounce glass at a time.

2) Munch selectively: Nibbling on small amounts of food throughout the day suppresses the appetite more than eating two or three larger meals. Munching on low-fat, high-fiber foods every few hours keeps the insulin levels steadier - and lower - than gorging. (High insulin levels stimulate appetite and prompt fat cells to take in fat molecules instead of allowing muscles to use them as energy.) Munching on carrots, peaches, oranges, pasta, potatoes, and oatmeal will keep your appetite in line.

3) Soup it up: Why is soup so satisfying? Researchers speculate that it takes up a lot of space in the stomach and is high in carbohydrates. Sip soup before large dinners or as a meal itself. Opt for a tomato-based soup; it's less fattening

than cream based soups and mayo-laden salads.

4) Load up on complex carbohydrates: Low-fat, high-carbohydrate foods such as rice, potatoes, beans and pasta, (without butter or sour cream), satisfy the appetite with fewer calories that high-fat foods, primarily be cause carbohydrates are easily converted to glycogen; fat is not, sand stored glycogen, the body's most important energy source, suppresses hunger.

5) Say yes to spicy foods: Mexican, Thai, Cajun and Jamaican cuisines all fill you more quickly than blander foods. The flavor is so intense you don't need so much to satisfy your appetite. In addition, spicy foods speed up your metabolic rate. The faster this rate, the more heat your body produces, and whatever warms you up, slims you down. So stock up on hot peppers, horseradish, chill powder and other spicy condiments and use them often!

6) Feast on fiber: Fibrous foods often require thorough chewing, which slows down your eating, and eating more slowly sometimes means eating less because your body has more time to recognize that it has received ample food. Twenty-five grams of fiber per day is recommended so stock up on barly, corn, oat products, beans, carrots and sweet potatoes and munch on these foods every day.

7) Eat Simply: Serving a wide variety of foods at one meal can cause you to eat more than you otherwise would. In other words, once you've had your fill of roast beef and bread, you may still crave the mashed potatoes and gravy. Limit entrees and side dishes to one per meal. Better yet, opt for a one pot meal both you and your lover can enjoy.

8) Out-exercise your appetite: Got the munchies? Take a walk, ride a bike, or head for the gym. Exercise reduces your immediate appetite by controlling insulin levels in your bloodstream, (steady, lower insulin levels depress the appetite), and by heating the body. (Few people can eat a lot after an intense aerobic exercise.)

9) Ask yourself why you want to eat: Eighty-five percent of us probably have psychological or emotional motives for overeating, and one of the primary ones is stress. If you habitually turn to food to soothe bad feelings, you must develop an alternate strategy to feel better. This means confronting your problem, not feeding it. Anti-stress measures , from counseling to a hot bath, can help you feel better and eat less.

10) Know your triggers: Eating is so dependent on external cues that just seeing food makes us want to eat. To eliminate this problem, bar fattening foods from your home. If your lover or housemate must have sweets, or high-fat foods on hand, ask him or her to hide them from you! Also, keep a record of everything you eat for one week. Write down absolutely everything you eat, why you ate it and why you started thinking about food. (Was it an advertisement, an aroma, an emotion?) Then look for patterns in your responses to certain stimuli. By identifying your appetite cues, you may be able to outsmart a craving the next time it rears its ugly head.

Para Lee McGee is a free lance writer from Hopewell, New Jersey who specializes in health related issues.

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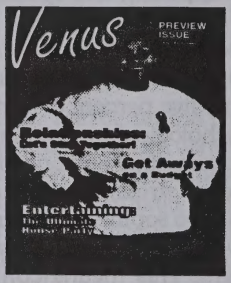

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AGE

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live with lover/rmmate
live on campus
live with parent/s

WILL BUY NEW CAR WITHIN

1-3 mo 6 mo 12 mo. 2 yrs.

FAVORITE TYPE RESTAURANTS

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Italian French Thai
Mexican Jamaican Columbian

WILL VACATION OUTSIDE YOUR CITY WITHIN THE NEXT

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INDENTIFICATION

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FAVORITE MUSIC

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION

lesbian gay man transgender
bi/female bi/male straight

THE ARTS YOU SUPPORT REGULARLY

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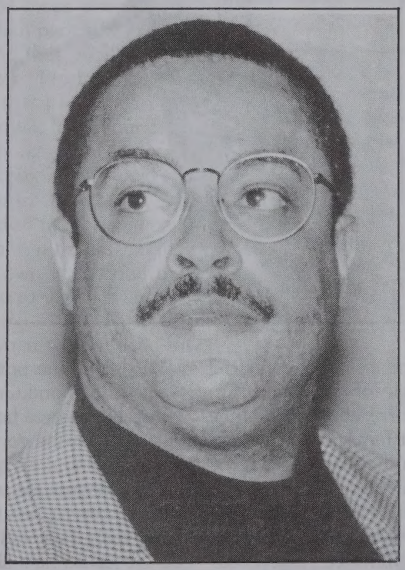
CONFRONTATION WITH SELF:

A Conversation with E. Lynn Harris

by Douglas E. Jones

His success has been nothing short of phenomenal, documented by his visibility to Black Gay America, Black America, as well as America in general. Best-selling thirtysomething author E. Lynn Harris has captured the minds and hearts of thousands with his books Invisible Life and Just As I Am. In a time when America has been catapulted backwards into the grips of staunch Republican conservatism, Mr. Harris has taken the opportunity to explain the truths of life, of differing realities, possibly opening the door towards the beginnings of community and societal wide healing. The opportunity to tell his story, to explain his truths, has not been without its own unique challenges, but Mr. Harris relishes those memories. He has overcome those challenges and has used the combination of his sales savvy and 'down home' delivery to keep him connected and grounded to his audience. Lynn, as he is known—the 'E' is a secret which he must keep for himself, he notes with a twinkle of mischief in his eyes—has not assumed the mantle of fame endemic to an author who has exceeded anticipated sales of 10,000 books by almost twenty times that amount, with no end in sight. And *this* on the eve of the paperback release of Just As I Am. Recently, he addressed a packed audience at Georgia State University; the bond between he and the crowd was instantaneous and as I searched for a word to accurately describe him the mantra of *'Realness!'* kept recurring in my mind. I invite you to read why.



Venus Magazine: When you started writing the books, did you have a target audience in my mind or did you write from personal experience?

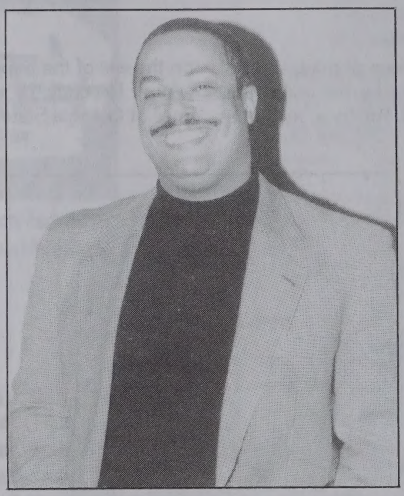
Lynn Harris: I wrote the books from personal experience. I didn't necessarily have a target audience in mind. I just knew the truth of what I was writing about.

VM: We've spoken before about the stark nature of the fan mail that you've received relative to Just As I Am. In terms of Black gay men, would you comment on some of those responses?

LH: You know, it's amazing the amount of pain people are in—especially young, Black gay men. One person wrote me and said that he wished he had this book in high school. I've gotten a letter from a professional athlete who wrote me completely anonymously, he

didn't want to use his name—he couldn't afford to 'come out'. But he said that the books [Invisible Life and Just As I Am] have touched him. He said that so much of the books were true and that, even though he couldn't come out, the books have helped him. I answer all of my mail, but I couldn't write him back—he just signed a single name to the letter. He just wanted me to know.

VM: That is so painful when you consider the issue of 'coming out' and the mental and emotional freedom that goes along with it. Certainly, the goal is not for everyone to come out, but everyone should at least have the freedom to do so if that's what they choose.



LH: I agree with you that everyone can't come out, but I think it's a shame because since I've written the book and since I've come out, my life has never been better. There is no pretense, there are no more lies and it's just a wonderful way to live and I wish that for everyone. But, everyone still has to worry about jobs, they still have to worry about family, they have to worry about someone in their life. This is my job now, so I'm not threatened by anyone.

VM: How do we balance those points between family, jobs, and having someone in your life? How can that dilemma be negotiated? How much is 'too out'—how much 'out' can 'out' be?

LH: I think that people can find love while being in the closet, because a lot of Black men are in the closet and somehow we manage to find each other. But, I think that some of the things that lovers enjoy with each other become somewhat restricted. You know, like sharing being in love with your parents, your brothers and sisters, or just the people who are important to you. That is not a possibility if you're in the closet. It also minimizes or negates how many of us there actually are. Recently, a friend—who I've known for a long time—told me her brother came out to her and she was totally in shock. She said she would have never guessed it in a million years and although she was able to accept it because of having known me, *she* thought that maybe *I* was different. But, she saw that this can happen in a family where there is a mother and father, where there is a lot of love, where there are no harsh realities.

VM: The 'American Dream'.

LH: Right. She asked him how long he'd been gay and he said all his life. It shocked her because she finally realized that it wasn't due to some imbalance. You know, I always tell people, 'What do you think? That there's someone secretly taking our little Black boys in the middle of the night and making them gay?' That's not what's happening.

VM: Is that the point of beginnings at which we see Raymond, Jr. in Just As I Am? In Invisible Life we see he starts the process and in Just As I Am he continues trying to reconcile what is going on with Kyle, with what's going in his personal life, with how he's interacting with Nicole.

LH: Yeah. I wanted to see some growth with him, because he's like a lot of people. I still have a lot of friends who are in the closet. The majority of letters I get are from people who are in the closet. They just need someone they can talk to—the pain, you can almost feel it in the letters. Where do they go? It's really difficult because there really is no place for young, Black gay men and lesbian women to go. Our community isn't organized; there's no safe haven. The White gay community is definitely not a place where we can find a permanent home.

VM: Because of the challenges of racism.

LH: Right. You know, home should be a place where you feel completely safe and completely at *home*. And we may not feel that in the Black community as a whole because they don't understand us. Then, when we go into the White gay community, there is that problem of racism, be it overt or subtle.

VM: How can we bridge that gap? If the Black community is homophobic, where is our opportunity for healing?
LH: I don't think that the Black community is as much homophobic as they are uneducated and uninformed. The opportunity is for more people to share their lives with their families, with their churches, with those people who are important to them, then people would see that this is not something that people would willy-nilly go out and choose. Most of the Black lesbian and gay people that I know don't fit those stereotypes which cause fear in our community. If people were more honest and open about who they are the community would see that . *That* is what I tried to do with Just As I Am; if you have any kind of faith, if you have any kind of backbone, your *faith* tells you that God made you in your own image and that you really have to be true to yourself.

When this is all over—when we are dead—it really won't matter what you thought of me. What will matter most is what I knew to be true about myself and what God already knew. And how I lived my life. And how I lived my life. *And how I lived my life*. If you're living your life in the closet, I'm not saying that you're living a lie, but you're not really living your life.

There's so much difference in what a 'gay life' is, I mean, what is that? Just live your life the way you see fit—but, be comfortable with it, don't restrict your life and don't live your life in fear.
VM: You touched briefly on the need for Black gays and lesbians to share with our churches and spirituality is a strong theme in Just As I Am. Are you a member of New Birth Baptist Church?
LH: I'm getting ready to move my membership.
VM: So, it's true—that the church is fostering a homophobic environment?
LH: Well, yes, Pastor Long said something recently in *Newsweek* or *Time Magazine* that really unnerved me and the last time I was there he was preaching on it. It seems like there's been a change because when I first started going there, I thought it was a wonderful place and I felt like the spirit was there and that there was a lot of love there. But, lately when I've gone I've felt this homophobic, hate, kind of atmosphere, so I am not going back there anymore and I'm going to move my membership. I'm really having a big battle with church right now because I think church should be a place where we preach love and the churches are not. They are absolutely not. My faith is stronger now than its ever been and I don't need human beings to dictate to me how I should be.

Church should be a place where we get love, where we go and celebrate the love that Christ has for us. It's become a political thing, it's become something that it should have never been. I'm looking for a place where all they preach are the teachings of Jesus Christ and love. And I really have a problem with the fact that so many gay brothers and lesbian sisters just sit in these homophobic churches and allow that stuff to go on.

VM: In terms of ground level acceptance of self, as Black gays, what are we doing to ourselves that will not allow us to come into each others' spaces when we are trying to build relationships.
LH: A fear of really revealing ourselves. It boggles the mind the way we treat each other—the way we have such unhealthy relationships. It's because we have no role models [in the context of being gay], we have no one to look up to and we run whenever there's a real risk of intimacy. Basically, I think it's because of how we're taught and how we're raised as men—gay men are no different from straight men in that respect. The same that Black women are crying about, Black gay men are crying about in terms of their treatment of each other.
VM: Do you consider yourself a role model?
LH: No.
VM: Why not?
LH: Simply because I think people need to

find their role models at home.

VM: But, when you talk about structuring the reality of a Black gay man and him not having anyone to look up to, you're in a prime position to be that person.

LH: I accept it only if people realize that I'm human and that I make mistakes, that I'm not perfect, and that I'm still a work in progress. A role model in the sense of offering encouragement? Yeah, because I answer every bit of mail that I get—I don't give a form letter. It's getting overwhelming, but I still take that time because people write me and they share so much of their lives with me. I can't ignore that. It's funny, I've been thinking a lot about my grandmother, who just passed, and she always thought that I would be a minister or something and in a lot of respects I do feel like Christ is working through me. I ask myself, why me? I'm no different from anyone else, why am I getting this opportunity? There have been a few letters which really do make me cry, because people talk about how much I've helped them and I don't know what I've done. I've just basically given what I have learned to be true about myself and what I have learned to be true about life. So, I do take the designation of role model with a good deal of apprehension.

VM: The're numerous stories describing your challenges in bringing Invisible Life to the market place. Are publishers finally recognizing the potential of their Black gay and lesbian readership? Are there more opportunities for emerging Black lesbian and gay writers?

LH: I hope so. I definitely hope so. I think publishers have seen, with myself, with James Earl Hardy [author of *B-Boy Blues*], that those stories are definitely marketable and that we're looking for stories about ourselves. Publishing is a very closed society. Even for those who get in, you've got to make sure your publisher is behind you and will make a commitment to getting your book out there and getting you the same opportunities that other authors get. Even with the number of Black authors—both gay and straight—that are out there, there is only a small percentage of them that are getting the dollars behind advertising and marketing. I've been very blessed at Doubleday. I couldn't have found a better home, but that's not everyone's situation. Publishers are going to have learn about the diversity of our issues. E. Lynn Harris' story is not the only story out there and what I've done is to show that there is a market for our kind of stories.

VM: What are your expectations of Black lesbians and gays as we move towards the objective of establishing a visible and viable Black gay community?

LH: I think it has to start with a oneness of self and then move to community. I just don't see a cohesive unit anywhere—in terms of the Black gay community. There are pockets of people trying to do things, trying to make changes, but no one has really captured the masses.

VM: You have success, you are recognized, what's important to you right now?

LH: Well, I realize that it's people who are my employer—the people with whom I come into contact everyday. I have to make myself accessible; I have to be out there talking to folks and answering their letters. If I took the high road and said, 'Well, I don't have to do this anymore,' I would be right back to where I started. The one thing that I prayed for after I prayed for success was to remain humble. I don't want to ever forget what a blessing this has been for me; it's not because I'm a great writer—it's just because this is my time. And there will be other people after me and I hope they respond to success in a similar way. To me that's the most important thing: That I stay grounded and that I not think, for one second, that I'm better than anyone else.

VM: What's in the future for you? Can we expect to hear anymore about Raymond, Jr.?

LH: You know, I was thinking about him today—wondering how he's doing. I think he and Trent are going to be happy. What I'd like to do with him in the future is to show his entire growth and to show that he's comfortable with himself and in a stable relationship. That's something that people have asked me to do: Try and provide some guidelines for a successful relationship. I think we could have successful relationships if we could be completely honest with ourselves and one another.

VM: So, that's the message—it starts with self.

LH: It starts with self.

VM: Thank you for your time and your example.

LH : You're very welcome. Thank you.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

LAUGHING IN THE DARK: FROM COLORED GIRL TO WOMAN OF COLOR
by B.J.

This is the story of the author. Patrice Gaines, who is introduced to us as a black girl who feels powerless, attempts to gain power through the men in her life.

Teenage pregnancy, marriage to someone who is not the father of her baby and deceiving her in-laws into believing their son is the father are just a few of the mistakes she makes early in life. Her father's inability to express his love for her is a major factor in her decisions to continually choose men who use and abuse her.

Patrice gives us a painful but honest look at her life while struggling to survive in a world where she believes her strength comes from the men she loves. She is raped, introduced to drugs by these men and finally finds herself imprisoned because she carries drugs for her man. But despite these painful events, this book is far from depressing. It is empowering, inspirational and hopeful because she survives and, with the help of a therapist, learns to love herself. The message of self-empowerment through self-love is one that can never be heard too much. We are shown that despite living in a society where sexism, racism and homophobia are all too common, self-love is the key to unlocking these chains and is vital in destroying self-hatred!

Gaines states that she wrote this book for "those young sisters" she witnessed on her newspaper beat. However, this forty plus lesbian found it to be a source of inspiration and empowerment. Her message of self-love has something to offer everyone of us regardless of age, race or sex and is a message we all vitally need to hear and hear again. LAUGHING IN THE DARK is a book that reminds us that no life is so hopeless it cannot be saved.

PLAYS

"SENSUALITY"

Sisters of 30 Something Special presented Think It's Not When It Is, Inc., a female theatre troupe from NYC last month at the West End Cultural Arts Center. Shame on you if you were not in the mix. The girls had it going on! These four seasoned professionals presented true to life black lesbian day-to-day drama in a way that was real, but not abrasive, funny but not ridiculous, and delivered a powerfully, upbeat message that left a packed house full of gorgeous women high on a cloud of black lesbian esteem! Our hats are off to promoter, Tracy Fields, for a first class job well done!!

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

Tina Divore

Age: 41
Hometown: Tallahassee, Fla.
Status: In a relationship for about three years
Former Titles: Ms. World, Ms. Atlanta, Ms. Hotlanta

A legend in her own time, Tina Divore is one of the classiest performers to ever grace the stage. She sends a positive message with each performance and handles her audience with such ease and warmth that you can't help but feel connected to her very soul. "I have a great faith in God and I guess that comes across in what I do." As show director at the Armory in Atlanta, Tina Divore is a dance down memory lane for those of us who have enjoyed her for years.

THE *pearl* GARDEN

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PROGRAM DIRECTOR NEEDED:

Responsible for overseeing all client services, housing, volunteer management and prevention education programs. Experience working with people of color, people living with HIV/AIDS, gays, transgender, lesbians, bisexuals. Minimum of three years administrative and supervisory experience, five years employment in HIV/AIDS related field, MSW preferred. Send resume, cover letter and three references to: Rudolf H. Carn, AESM, Inc., P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

HOUSE MANAGER NEEDED:

Responsible for residential operations, implementation of the residential program and developmental/administration of the residence. Experience developing and managing social service programs for gay/bisexual men and lesbians. Experience in HIV/AIDS disease and nonprofit organizations preferred. Send resume, cover letter to: Delores Rollins, AESM, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E

HIV/AIDS OUTREACH WORKERS NEEDED:

Late evenings and nights (20 hrs/wk) to conduct outreach to patrons of black gay night spots, will train. Persons should be comfortable with frank talk about HIV/AIDS & Sex. Please send resume & cover letter to: AIDS Education/Services for Minorities, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR NEEDED

Must have truck or van and be physically able to lift 25lb. boxes. Part time position. 622-8069, Venus Line.

PROOF READER NEEDED

Volunteer needed only a few hours every month to review text before publication. 622-8069, Venus Line.

OLYMPIC-SIZE VICTORIAN

Two-story, stucco exterior, three bedrooms, two full baths, A/C, gorgeous oak floors throughout, fabulous winding staircase, stained glass window, loaded with character, off street parking, deck! Only minutes from the opening ceremonies! $125.00. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

PICTURE PERFECT BUNGALOW

This Victorian on the park is an excellent home for the most meticulous buyer. Glamorous entrance foyer, gallery style central hall, seven transoms, four fireplaces, gleaming heart pine floors, A/C, privately fenced lot. $135,000. Call Charlene (404) 627-0520

BARGAIN HUNTER'S DOWNTOWN DEAL

Two spacious Victorians, partially renovated, A/C, new roof, hardwood floors, off street parking. You've got the basics, now bring your imagination. Both owners want offers yesterday! Mid 80's. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

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First home? This intown bungalow could be just the ticket! Two bedrooms, one bath, huge screened in porch, fireplace, built-in book shelves, gorgeous yard, off street parking. Reduced to $54,000. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

BUSINESS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR TAX CONSULTANT

By Syles Williams

If that old shoe box is empty or just became a place to put those receipts you didn't know what to do with, or that new file box you purchased last year as recommended by your tax preparer is still in the cellophane, or you haven't emptied your purse yet, or that junk drawer that you can hardly open now just seems too overwhelming to tackle, you may want to use the following checklist as a guide to prepare yourself for getting ready to see someone like me, your PERSONAL TAX CONSULTANT.

1. Copies of last year's tax returns (Federal, state, local). (Legible, please.)

2. All W-2s, 1099-Rs, interest and dividend earned statements, social security benefits statement, and any other statement of income earned or unearned. (If you received a statement, believe me, IRS got a copy first.)

3. Labels and envelopes from your Federal, State and local booklets. (Using these pre-addressed labels expedites the processing of the returns for quicker refunds.)

4. Refund statement of state or local 1993 income taxes. (You may or may not have to report your previous refund(s).)

5. All **compiled** business, rental, or farm income and expense documents. (That extra brown bag or shoe box will cost you.)

6. All documents regarding any property or stocks sold during the year. (In addition, what was your cost basis in these items sold? The reaction to this question is awesome!)

7. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION statement. (I know you didn't think you had to pay taxes on this money, after all, you were unemployed. Sorry. It's taxable.)

8. Closing statement for any realty property purchased or refinanced during 1991- 1994. (You may have a refund coming from those seller-paid points.)

9. CHILD CARE provider information. Name, address, identification number of provider and amount paid. (This deduction may be disallowed if the information is not provided.)

10. A CHECK FOR THE PREPARATION OF YOUR TAX RETURN. (A BIGGER CHECK IF WE (TAX PREPARERS) HAVE TO FIND ITEMS 1-9 IN THE BROWN BAG OR SHOE BOX.)

Now, if all else fails, you could purchase one of those tax programs and do it yourself, or you could let IRS prepare them (returns) for you. Well, in either case, would you know that you are getting all the breaks that are available?

In the event that I don't see your smiling face in my place, here are a few

tax tips for you and/or your tax preparer.

1. The basic earned income credit for 1994 is available to Taxpayers with qualifying children and Taxpayers without qualifying children. To qualify, your income must not exceed: $23,754 if you have one qualifying child, $25,295 if you have two or more qualifying children, $8,999 without any qualifying child.

2. Educational expenses (tuition, books, travel, seminars) to improve your present skills or to maintain your present job, may be deducted, if you itemize your deductions.

3. Casualty losses (flood, fire, theft, etc.) that exceed 10% of your adjusted gross income are deductible providing certain requirements are met.

4. Contributions of $250 or more at any one time, cash or non cash, requires a written acknowledgement from the donee organization on or before the date the return is filed.

5. If a chemically dependent person gets treatment at a therapeutic center (drug or alcohol abuse center), the costs of the care, including room and board, are deductible as medical expenses. Mileage to AA or DA meetings are also deductible.

6. The portion of the legal fee for advice on the tax consequences of the divorce is deductible.

7. Job seeking expenses, (travel, transportation, resumes, etc.) are deductible even though job placement was unsuccessful.

8. Your dependent family member living with you last year could very well qualify you for head of household status if you are single and other requirements are met.

9. Taxpayers who underestimate withholdings or estimated payments by ten percent or more may be penalized. Be sure of proper withholding on second jobs and all employee distributions from profit sharing and pension plans.

10. Always keep tax returns, receipts and tax supporting documents for at least 5 years. Be sure to sign, date and mail all returns by April 17, 1995. Also be sure to include social security numbers, form numbers and years paid, on all checks submitted to IRS or state and local authorities.

Well, now that you have become an instant tax expert, you might be ready to crunch those numbers, take an aspirin, or leave all tax preparation to the TAX PREPARERS!

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY BIG REFUND!!

God Is Love

(404) 763-2149

SYLESTER WILLIAMS
&
ASSOCIATES

ACCOUNTANT
FINANCIAL & TAX CONSULTANT
Enrolled Agent With IRS

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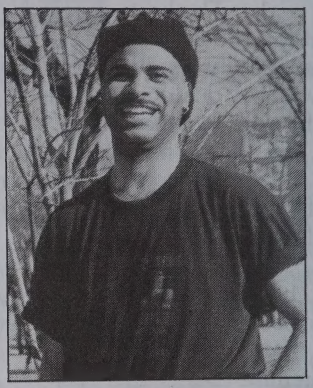
EAST POINT, GA 30344

PROFILE OF A MAN

Willie Broussard



Age: 28
Status: Single
Hometown: Port Author, Texas
Career: Reservation supervisor, and bartender - Back Door Pub
Last Book Read: "In Search of Satisfaction", by J. California Cooper

Willie resides in our nation's capital and is Hospitality Chair of the 1995 Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Day, Inc. in Washington, D.C. He enjoys black novels, jazz, gospel, soft soul and reggae. He governs himself in the philosophy of being help to others.

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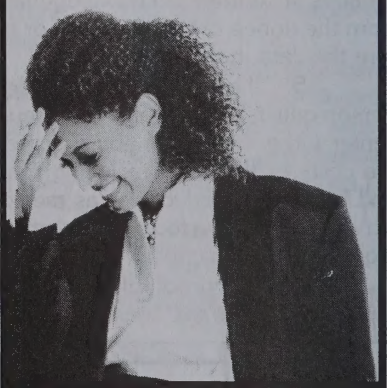

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Gay Spirit Visions Presents
Our Second Annual Spring Gathering
for Gay and Bisexual Men

Spiritual Vision is one of the most empowering aspects of a healthy, fulfilling life, and one of the most important gifts Gay men can share with each other and the world.

Join us in a day of spiritual exploration and weaving.

Our process involves sharing at many levels and includes large and small group interaction, discussion, facilitated movement, ritual, various workshops, a heart circle, vegetarian lunch, and an evening party.

The day is brought to you by our Gay Spirit Visions community, part of our ongoing exploration which includes an annual Conference in Highlands, North Carolina. We welcome newcomers as well as previous participants.

WHEN: Saturday, April 1, 1995. 9:30AM - 6:00PM
WHERE: Friends Meeting House
Party 8:00PM - Midnight. Location to be announced
COST: $30 preregistered by March 25. $35 at the door.
No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Send registration fee to:
GSV/Spring Conference
P.O. Box 339
Decatur, GA 30031-0339
For more information call Todd at 284-4286.

Make plans now for the sixth Gay Spirit Visions Conference, **September 21 - 24, 1995**. *Awakening the Elder Within: A Journey of Soul.* The Friends Meeting House is located at 701 W. Howard Avenue in Decatur.

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EDUCATION

SISTERLOVE

AIDS is a serious problem for women. Women who are sexually active and/or are active drug users are a great risk for HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the cause of AIDS. Women who are infected with HIV need comprehensive support, treatment and care. To take care of ourselves and our families, we must become educated about the risks and effects of AIDS. Women should also be supported in their daily lives as they live with this disease.

SisterLove, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established to provide education and support for women by women who are at risk for or are already infected with HIV or have AIDS. While we recognize and address the needs of all women, African-American women, the most affected population among women with AIDS, receive particular attention within all our culturally appropriate programs.

The LoveHouse Supportive Living and Love Works day Activities Program includes housing, support groups, case management, daily workshops and seminars, outings and retreats for HIV+ women. Both programs currently have space available. For more information on how to apply, contact Annette Dufau at (404) 696-1350.

Founder and director Dazon Dixon was presented with the Fund for Southern Communities' annual "Touchbearer Award". This prestigious award is presented to an individual in recognition of their superior effort for grassroots social change. The recipients reflect the strength and diversity of the movement for social change in the South. Congratulations to Dazon and thank you for your strong example.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN METRO ATLANTA OVER:

54% OF ALL AIDS cases are BLACK; 67% of ALL BLACK MEN WITH AIDS are GAY or BISEXUAL. AIDS IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG BLACK MEN AGES 25-44.

Join us in the fight against HIV/AIDS! Our primary focus is gay, black men. We provide support through nutritional counseling, housing assistance and placement, bar/club outreach, support groups, financial assistance, and safer sex workshops for AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

AESM is on the PROWL; and we're coming to your neighborhood!! As of yet, there is no known cure for AIDS. Our purpose is to assist and educate those who have been and are at risk of being infected with HIV. AESM's Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers are driven by the love and concern for our brothers and sisters with this motto: "We Love You, Love Yourself...BE SAFE..."

If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:

AIDS EDUCATION/SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM)
1432 Donnelly Ave., SW Atlanta, GA 30310 (404) 753-2900/4300

EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH

2

New York - Wow Cafe, in association with Kaleidoscope Theatre, presents three plays in one show! "Revolutionaries", "The Break", and "Crib". March 2 - 4, 1995, 8:00 p.m., $8.00. 59 East 4th St. Call (212) 460-8067

3

New York - G. Wells & Associates presents the Dynasty Affair. Dress to impress; Brooklyn. Contact Bobbie Moore, (301) 596-6167

9

New York - A working conference on Black Gay & Lesbian, Transgender people of African Descent presented by the Graduate School & University Center of City University of New York, Room 404 North 33 W. 42 St., NYC, N.Y. Speakers include Angela Davis and Essex Hemphill, and others. March 9-11, 1995.

10

Los Angeles - At The Beach...ATB, presents the 2nd anual Las Vegas Turn Arround! March 10-12, $80.00. The Saturday night Party in Vegas will be hosted by 4 of a Kind. Call (213) 969-1619

11

New York - The Four Seasons social Club presents a Dinner Dance at Micky Alan's Showboat, 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. After five attire. 814 Jamaica Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. Open bar, $50.00; hold tickets for after party at Edie's Place! Tilden Ave. at 31st St.. For ticket info call Mary at (718) 453-1267

14

Atlanta - Women in music/Atlanta presents "Women with Aids Benefit Concert" at Eddie's Attic; 8:00 p.m. 515 McDonough St., Decatur. The concert benefits SisterLove and celebrates Women's History Month. The 1995 Women in Music Calendar will be on sale!! (404)377-4976

15

Atlanta - SisterLove presents Shay Youngblood's "Talking Bones", a Lorraine Hansberry Award winning play about three generations of Black women who listen to the voices of their ancestors. 8:00 p.m., Horizon Theatre; $12.00 (404) 753-7733

16

New York - Fearnot Productions presents "Dot's Pocono Weekend". Sold out!! March 16 - 19, 1995.

18

Atlanta - AIDS 101 Awareness action seminar will be held Covenant Presb. Church, 2641 P'Tree Rd., 8 a.m. - 5:30 $15.00; lunch & childcare provided, call Aid Atlanta (404) 885-6800

19

Atlanta - Spring Fling dance by Sisters of 30 Something Special, 4-10 p.m. Club Oxygen (404) 997-6240

APRIL

8

New York - Annual Black and Gold Affair is sponsored by Simplicity Attractions Unlimited of New York. 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. The Marc Ballroom, 27 Union Square West between 15th & 16th St.. New York. After Five attire. $30.00. Contact Bess Knowing, (718) 992-9073

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MARCH

2 • Salute to Zora Neale Hurston by Alma Vineyard of Clark University at Charis Books & More - 7:30 p.m.

3 • The River's Edge Campground presents an open house party. All are welcome. For info/directions call (706) 213-8081

4 • Positive Black Lesbians United meet for a fun night of bowling at Express Lanes - 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. (404) 874-5703

5 • Mark Louganis will sign his new book, "Breaking the Surface" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. 931 Monroe Ave.

6 • Brother's Back-2-Back meets to rally HIV/AIDS support primarily for men of color EACH Monday evening, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756- 9202

7 • Care Time, a care givers support group meets EACH Tuesday evening, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.. These are ministers, counselors, doctors, directors, and other workers. Our Cousin's house, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

8 • Friends assemble men and women who are HIV+ EACH Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

9 • The Natural Healer's Network, Inc. presents Aromatherapy; "Gateways to Renewing Our Lives". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium. 6:45 p.m.

10 • Sisters of Thirty Something Special discuss "The Effects of the Ex", 7:00 p.m. At Revolution on Pharr Rd., (404) 997-6240

11 • Open House - Donor Appreciation Day at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave., 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. (404) 758-9202

12 • E. Lynn Harris will read from and sign "Just As I Am" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse at 7:30 p.m.; 931 Monroe Dr., Atlanta

23 • The National Healer's Network, Inc. presents "Healing Relationships". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium, 6:45 p.m.

25 • Safer Sex for Us...Women! A discussion sponsored by Sisters of Thirty Something Special, 7:00 p.m. at Revolution, Pharr Rd.

28 • Jackie Woodson, winner of two Library Association Awards, reads from "Autobiography of a Family Photo", Charis Books and More, 7:00 p.m. 1189 Euclid Ave.

30 • Sybil Washington & Angela Parker will read from "It Happens", (child sexual abuse). Important discussion follows. Charis Books and More. 7:30 p.m.

31 • Sister Bowl at Express Lanes, 7:30 p.m., Sisters of Thirty Something Special, sponsors.

31 • African American Outreach, meeting at Aid Atlanta, call for details. 872-0600

31 • The High Museum of Art & Image Film & Video presents filmmaker Lucy Massy Phenix in person. 8:00 p.m. (404) 352-4225

APRIL

1 • Gay Spirit Vision presents Our Second Annual Spring Gathering, 8:00 p.m. (404) 284-4286

The 411
ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE OTHERSIDE	1924 Piedmont Rd. (404) 875-5238	Wed.	Women 50% Men 50% Show	House R&B
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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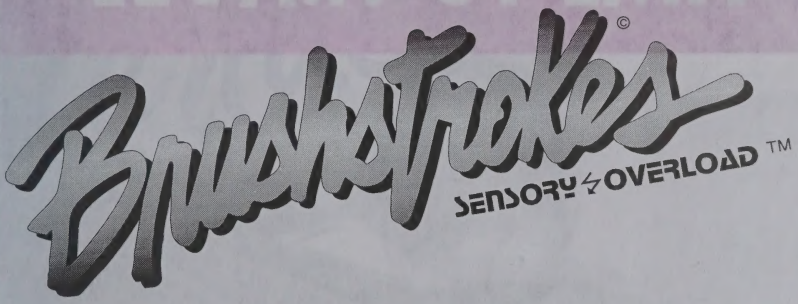
ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 659-5251
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBL), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002. (404) 250-7950
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, (404) 370-1392

OUT & ABOUT
sbians



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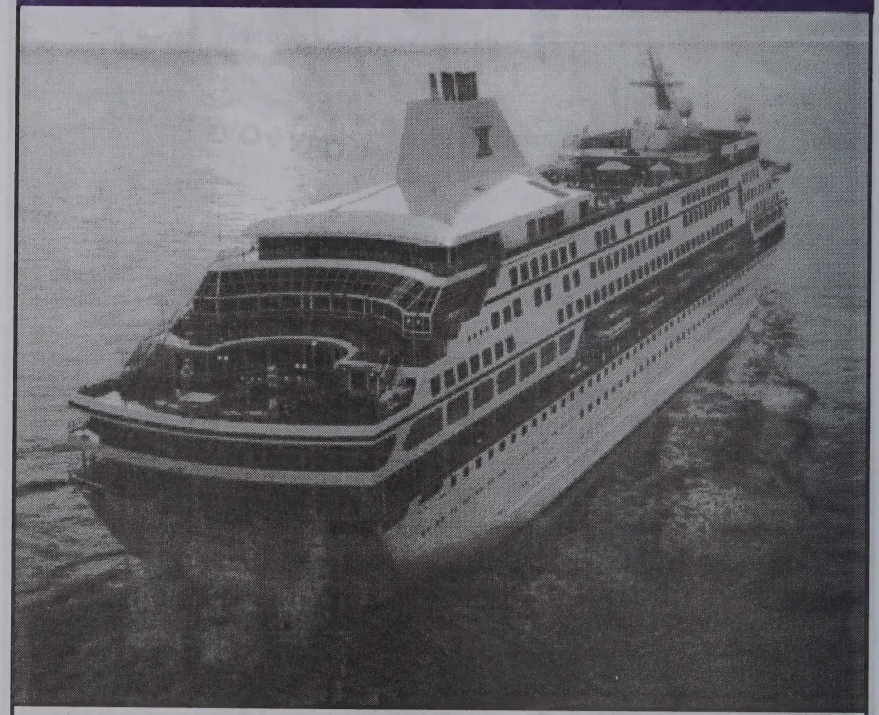

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RIO MALL
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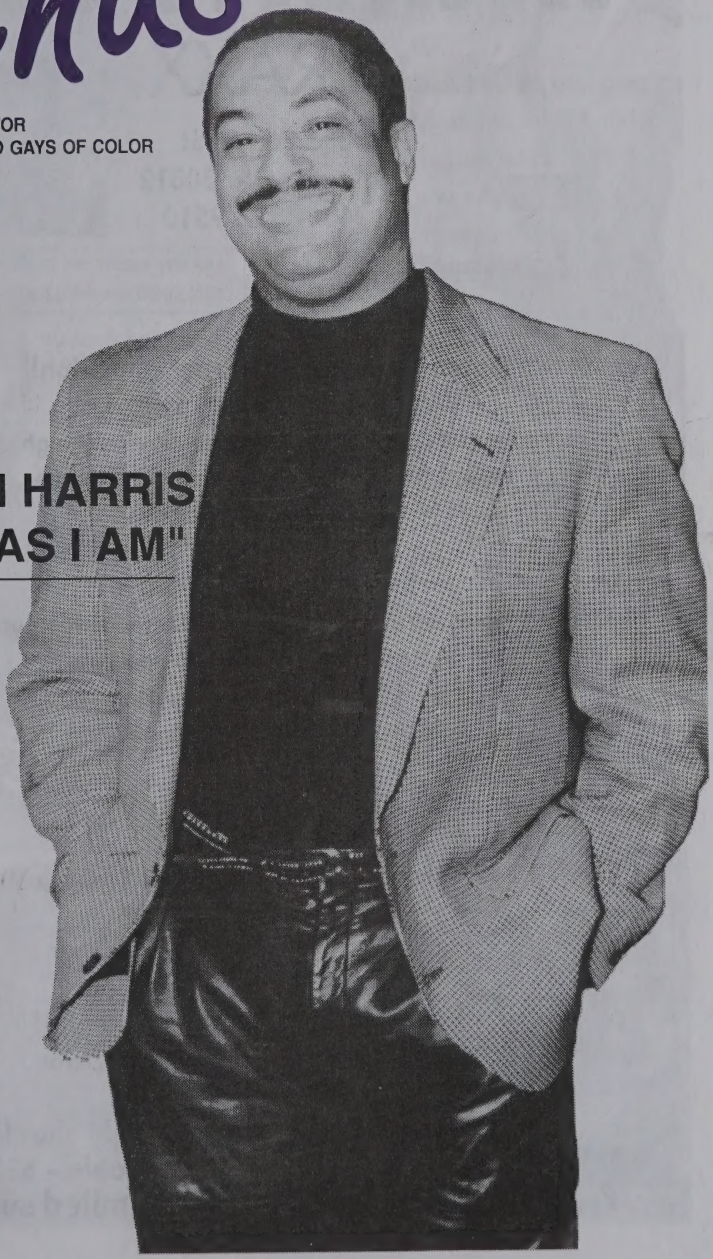
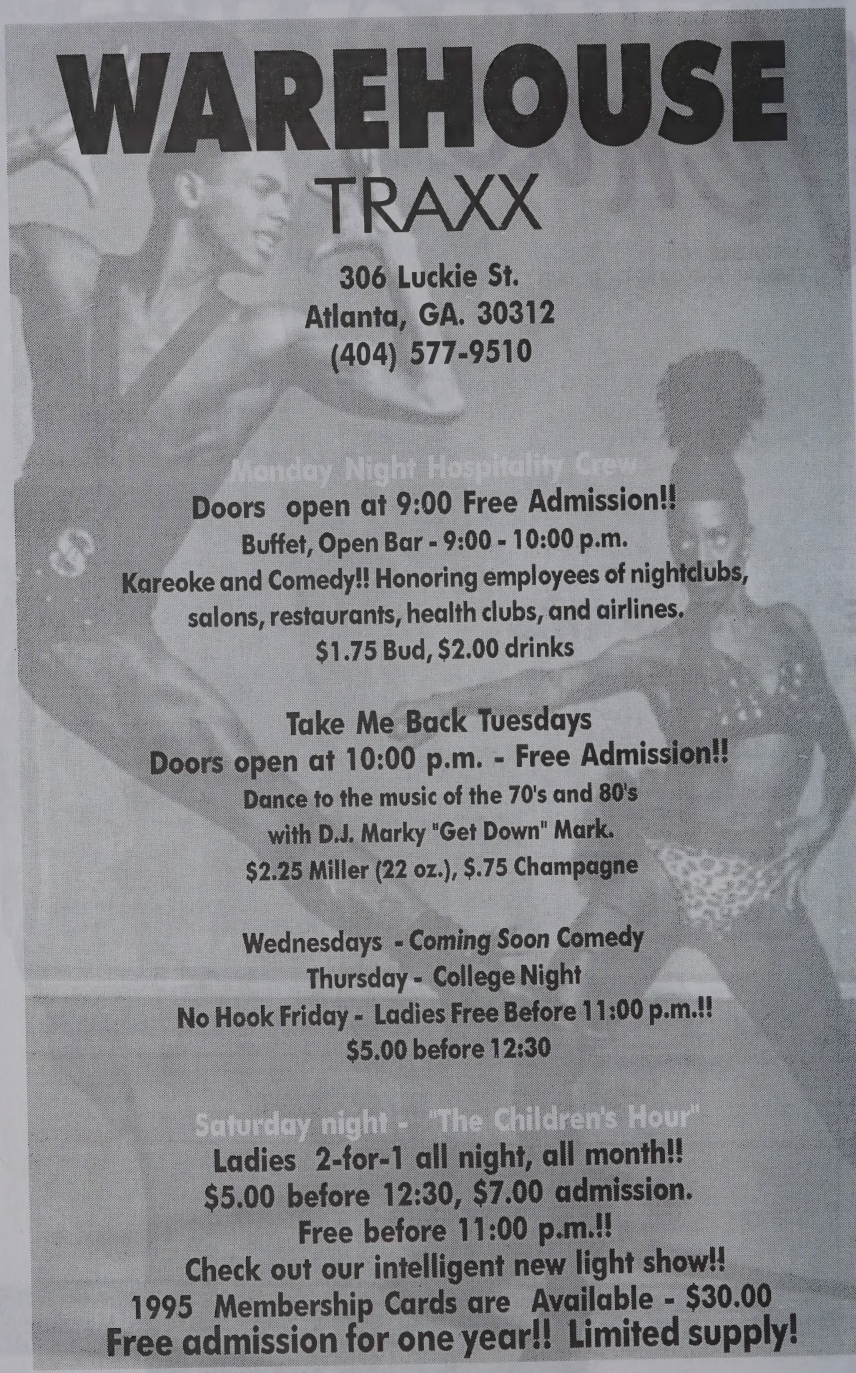


E. LYNN HARRIS
"JUST AS I AM"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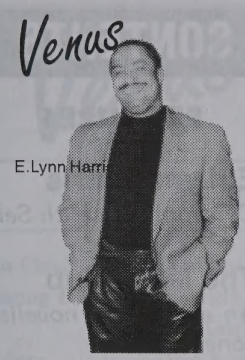

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Timing is everything!

To be black, lesbian, gay, drag, spiritual, intelligent, successful, independent, and full of talent is to be YOU. To be you and HAVE a true voice in this community is to be AWESOME. For every awesome black gay organization to come together, well that's POWER.

It's that time.

Editor in Chief
Charlene Cothran

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Thank you so much for publishing a magazine of substance and quality. You are right on time and target with your publication. As a college professor, I am proud to write to you and say that your magazine is very inspirational, touching and informative.

I pride myself on being one of your subscribers and again, congratulations for "Coming of Age".

Victoria Onasis

Greetings,

Just prior to her death, my life touched briefly and tangentially the life of Venus Landin. We worked together at Oxford Books, and I ran across her again at Sevanada.

Even though I am a white, heterosexual male, Venus was always friendly to, and interested in, me, as a person. She was not just acting nice. She was for real, and I knew it. I liked her very, very much. We used to share ribald commentary and laugh together.

Because she was a humble unpretentious person, and did not pack an attitude, there were many things I didn't know about her while she lived. To me, she was just a genuinely good person without prejudice, whom I liked and enjoyed.

Phillipe D'Angelo Van de Graff

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SPIRITUALITY

CONFIDENCE AND A MADE UP MIND

by Kamau Ifoma

A history of oppression, denial, injustice and abuse has been the greatest detriment to people of color. We have listened so long to what we cannot do that we have very little confidence in what we can do. It is this lack of confidence, not racism, hatred, lack of education or social injustice that creates the greatest deterrent to our progress. One of the best kept secrets in life is when children of God make up their minds, when they bring their minds into harmony with the desire in their hearts, when they pray for and follow intuitive guidance; then no one and nothing can stop them - no matter what color they may be. Confidence and a made up mind are the stuff Kings and Queens are made of.

"Acts of Faith"
by Iyanla Vanzant

Confidence and a made up mind are instruments of unconditional love. They are the tools used by an individual who knows who and whose he/she is. Individuals who have found, through much growth and development, perfect peace within themselves. They are not concerned about how others perceive them. Their confidence comes from the awareness that THEIR LIFE is a divine, unique and unrepeatable creation. Out of this confidence comes the made-up mind to live every moment as though it is created just for them.

I understand how this concept can seem impossible and improbable for many of you. We are part of a community who has survived a long history of oppression, bigotry and outcasting. The key term in the previous statement is "survive". We are a community of survivors. Through all the hatred, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., we continue each moment to survive. Through the self hatred, self abuse and self destructive behavior we continue each moment to survive.

We survive not just because we have been taught, by example, by many generations of survivors. We survive because we are created with the will to express Life. In expressing Life we have been provided with a gift, the opportunity to choose, define and perceive exactly what life is. The gift is an opportunity that we take for granted. We consistently allow others to label and define us. In doing so we actually give to others the power to create us. By claiming for ourselves who and whose we are then we become the creators of our world. We are no longer bound by the labels of those who wish to control and imprison us. We are now free to BE exactly what we are created to BE.

Through this process of learning to define our own existence we must reclaim the power which we have given away. Most often we give our power away very innocently, generally out of

loyalty, to those who genuinely love and respect us. They can be our families, churches, friends, employers. They request that we live by their rules because they think they know what is best for us. They are generally sincere in their concern for us. BUT because they don't walk in our shoes, nor we in their's, they can only guess at what is best for us as we can only guess at what is best for them. They were not put in our lives to interpret how life "should" be expressed through us.

No one can do this better for us than us. Your parents can only teach from their experience. Your church or religious affiliation can only provide you with a teaching as they understand it. Your friends can only be an example for you through their own choices. It is by your power, confidence and a made-up mind that your life finds its meaning. YOU are the interpreter of your world.

Always remember that we are Spiritual Beings first! As you use your creative power to define and create, why not create a world where you are special and divine. A world where you always come first. A world where no one determines who you are. Create a world where your love for yourself overrides all the "isms" which have, up to this time, held you in bondage. Create the world which Your Creator intended just for you. And since Your Creator said is OK for you to be black, male or female or transperson, gay or lesbian or bisexual then it makes no sense for you to allow someone else to overrule Your Creator. Through confidence and a made-up mind allow yourself to express just as Your Creator intended for only you to express. "I AM A SPIRITUAL BEING, CREATING THE WORLD IN WHICH MY CREATOR INTENDED JUST FOR ME. IT IS A WORLD OF PEACE, HAPPINESS AND ABOVE ALL UNCONDITIONAL LOVE. WELCOME TO MY WORLD!"

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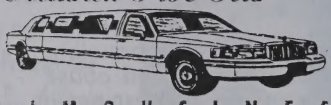

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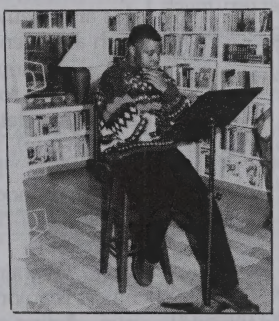
THE MALE CLUB: *An Indoctrination*

An excerpt from the forthcoming novel
by Douglas E. Jones

When I was young I used to dream in vivid technicolor, unwittingly, foolishly enamored of hamsters, dinosaurs, and anything that flew. I used to dream little black boy dreams of skinned knees and skateboards, dream dreams of bottle-top scaly on tar-topped streets and stoop ball on the front steps of brownstones. I would dream of little black girls in corn rows and pigtails, double-dutching and hop-scotching their way through glass-littered Brooklyn streets. Back then life was summertime, even in the winter, and, had anyone tried, it would have been hard to tell me otherwise, to show me where my dreams had begun to fade to nightmares, summertime fast becoming my life's blizzard.

It took several years of moving from one neighborhood to the next, but my parents finally settled us in a huge, weathered brownstone on the tree lined streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Mom and Dad were southern folks, part of that generation who reached beyond the horrors of strange fruit swaying from weeping trees; they had migrated north on the hopes of their parents and the promises of a not-so-distant future. Were Pop a different sort of man, he might've buckled under the weight of a reality which couldn't afford his dreams; instead he hustled his way through college on a basketball scholarship and an iron will, making sure dreams were the realities toward which his family could reach. And, perhaps it was the nature of her character or the force of her will that made Mom a phenomenon too early to be fully appreciated, but at a time when high school was still an achievement for most of us, Mom had finished her post undergraduate degree. She had that unique ability to make one yearn for the stars while anchoring firmly on earth. Little black boy dreaming, growing up on tree lined streets in Brooklyn, life was good to me and my memories of those first days are fond, full of piggyback rides, temper tantrums and a new bike each Christmas.



The arrival of my brother was an event which caused conflicting emotions: Joy at the responsibility of being an older brother, of providing an example to this bundle of wonder who would depend on me, but horror at the immediacy and abruptness of the moment in which my parents required that I grow up. It was suddenness which spoke of the gradual potential of new hopes, the possibilities of unfulfilled dreams, and the immense pitfalls of our humanity - children and parents alike - to which we are all susceptible. A suddenness complicated by the confusion of child's wants and his parents' dreams. While my parents tried not to usher my brother and I into the realm of their dreams, it was their unconscious recognition of these dreams that reflected back to them in the face of my brother and left me isolated and lonely on an island called home. And it was that loneliness, that isolation, the reflection of my brother and the persistence of their dreams which pressed down on me, weighed in on my consciousness and fueled the potency of my nightmares, questioning my worth and the supposed limitations my life offered.

Sex was more an assumed conversation rather than an obvious issue in my family: discussion on the topic between my Father and I always involved obscure situations and distant language commenting on the potential between myself and whomever I was calling girlfriend at the moment. Mother's advice was to sheath whatever desire was stirring in my pants - I was not yet ready for the potential responsibility. Between the two of them teen pregnancy avoidance was the goal and, sensing the awkwardness of those superficial conversations, I never let on that my desire lay elsewhere.

The developing nightmare which scared me the most, settled me into the deepest, most wintry part of my life, was a peculiar fascination with other boys. The fascination was even more profound than the discovery I made while drying myself one morning: Through some mysterious combination of rhythm and speed, with alternating amounts of pressure, I had elicited, from within the constraints of my loins, an extraordinary amount of pleasure, ending up collapsed and breathless across the washer machine. The experience preoccupied me for the better part of a week before my parochial school education informed me that this was self-manipulation (Actually, masturbation) for which the penalty was an eternity in hell (actually, the remote possibility of calluses to either participating member was the worst of it). So, too, it informed me, was the penalty for my preoccupation with other boys, but neither circumstance was ever part of their assumptions in conversations with my parents.

By the time I was a Junior in high school, I managed to perfect the daily mechanics necessary to stay alive. Black boy, not-so-little, growing up on the tree lined streets of Brooklyn, there was no one with whom I could talk, no where to turn, and it became increasingly difficult to live with myself. Somehow, I negotiated the nightmares, my life gaining in momentum as I successfully avoided myself, staying just a step ahead of self-destruction, managing, for a time, to escape impending doom. But the summertime had faded and winter settled, the blizzard of my life complete. So, I did what my parochial school education - salvation, I thought - advised: Will it out of existence - any way you could. Pray for forgiveness. Hard. Subject closed.

I didn't expect for it to come back.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...

So tell us - What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

My lover and I have been in a long distance relationship for four years. She lives thousands of miles away and comes to visit twice a year. She has always been very good to me. She insists on paying my rent and bills, in an attempt to control things. However I often become restless while she's away. I love her very much but I'm wondering is it wrong to have my sexual desires taken care of by another while she's away?

Signed Frustrated

Dear Frustrated,

No wonder you are frustrated! In order to answer your direct question, I must first comment on some stressors that are glaringly apparent in the context of this question.

Firstly, it is, AT BEST, difficult to have a short-term distant relationship. Four years in this type of relationship would be extremely trying. Coupled with the fact that on average you see this person once every six months is certainly not conducive to the soil which would blossom the strength and healthiness of a solid, long lasting relationship.

For couples, many issues and obstacles must be hurdled. And many wants, needs, and goals must be responded to by the relationship. The opportunity to meet many of these tasks is not available with distance. This only occurs, in its fullest, through the process of ongoing constant interaction. Granted, distance is an obstacle in itself, but must not be the primary task or FOUNDATION of the relationship.

This brings up certain questions. What is the nature and type of this relationship? What is the understanding which this couple have agreed upon? And, why has this couple found this arrangement to be so bearable for such an extended period?

At any rate, with this in mind, I will attempt to say here that if you have an open relationship, (not exclusively one-on-one), sex with others IS usually permitted. If, however, you have a closed, monogamous relationship, it is usually NOT desirable to have sex with others.

Wanting and fantasizing about others is an ongoing human characteristic. Acting on these desires and fantasies, if the agreement is monogamy, can be extremely detrimental to the relationship.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089

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SAINTS & 'AINTS

Between you and me and the gate post, the churches in Cotsville got more 'aints than saints. If Jesus happen to come back one of these old Sunday mornings, he'd do better dropping by the tavern than trying to find a friend in any one of the sanctuaries in this town.

It ain't good to talk about folks, but the truth is, everybody shouting and saying "Amen", ain't got no God in 'em.

At First Bible Way Baptist, the hypocriting got so bad, Missionary Porter had to change her affiliation 'fore she lost her religion. It all come to a head one Sunday morning after the benediction. The right Reverend Obadiah Wilson had just preached an almighty love-your-neighbor sermon and everybody was feeling the fire. I mean even Mary and Lou who had just joined Missionary Porter for that Sunday service found themselves rocking and reeling when Reverend Obadiah brought the message. At one point Mary lost herself and screamed, "Preach the Word!!!" Lou blushed with embarrassment as everyone turned and looked in their direction. Missionary patted Lou's hand and said, "Let the Lord have his way."

And He did. You had to see Clovis Jr., who got so happy he stretched forth his arms and knocked a hole in the just plastered wall where the choir sits. Cleveretta whispered to Teresa how "all that wasn't necessary", but everybody in Cotsville knows that Clovis Jr. don't have no sense when it comes to praising God. Even Missionary Porter remembers when First Bible Way Baptist went to visit its sister church in Scarsboro. They were singing "Near the Cross" and when they got to that part about finding peace beyond the river, Clovis Jr. stood up and stretched forth

his arms and fell backwards knocking down every folding chair that was standing, shouting, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", as he dropped. The pastor, Reverend Rayford Greenfield, didn't appreciate it either, but before the members could set the chairs back up good, Clovis Jr. fell out a second time. "THANK YA!!!!!!!"

This Sunday was no different. Didn't a soul flinch when his fist went through the wall. The organ didn't stop nor the piano. The saints kept giving God their wave praises and the 'aints, like Cleveretta, whispered their criticisms. "I dont't see why a man got to have his hair straightened and curled like that. While he' 'hooping and hollaring, I wonder who he think he gonna fix that wall", Cleveretta fumed. "His hair look better than mine", Teresa added, pulling her wig down to cover her nappy kitchen, which had been showing for most of the service.

Mother Martha, who didn't like to say nothing wrong on nobody, was down right disgusted with Clovis Jr. He looked right female in his choir robe. When it came time to lead the song, he flapped his arms and bent and swayed like he had rubber in his body. "Sugar in his blood", Mother Martha was known to remark every week. Missionary Porter patted Martha's shoulder every chance she got and said, "just bless him, he's really so sweet."

Clovis Jr. wasn't thinking about Martha, Mary or John; he had his mind stayed on Jesus and that new male member that recently joined the choir. Michael Kincaid, who had just moved to Cotsville from St. Louie, was a fine, strapping young man. He dressed in fashion style and his cologne stank so good he could have got up in that choir even if he didn't sing like a sparrow. This very Sunday when Clovis Jr. thought about the dinner he'd be having with this just joined choir member after service, he reared back and stretched out with joy and when he came to himself he was pulling his fist out of the new plastered wall where the choir sits. Wasn't nothing to say but, "THANK YA!!!!!!!", and he said or two or three times, right loudly.

This particular Sunday morning, with Mary and Lou in the pews and Reverend Obadiah sho nuff preaching the word, Missionary Porter was sitting gap-legged caught up in the spirit and had no intention of losing her grace, but the stare in the faces and the whispering simmering around her brought her back to reality. Sometimes she wanted to grab folks and shake the stew outta them for being so hateful, but she promised to hold her peace and let the Lord fight her battles a long time ago and she wasn't about to backslide for no imps of the devil, not this Lord's day morning.

The hypocriting got started soon after Reverend Obadiah's heartfelt "Let the Lord watch between me and thee, while we're absent from one another, Let all God's people say AMEN.", Gardenia and Magnolia, the flowers twin daughters, happen to circle after service with Cleveretta, Teresa, and Mother Martha. Missionary knew something was wrong the way all of them kept up their stare on Mary and Lou. Lou noticed it, too, and stuck her hands deep in her pockets. Mary hardly saw anything at first; she was so busy

collecting all the hugs, kisses and praise-the Lords from the other saints. The mess really started when Lou went to help Mary on with her jacket.

"See that!" Martha say.

"It's a 'bomination, I tell ya", Gardenia fumed.

"Seem to me the two of them need to get outta Cotsville and take Clovis Jr. wit 'em!" Mother Martha suggested, her whole body tightening as she spoke.

"I can't see it for the life of me what one woman want with another", Cleveretta whispered.

Teresa say, lifting up the side of her wig to scratch a persistent itch, "I bet Lou is the man when they get together."

Cleveretta say, "She look like she make a good man."

"What you say?", Mother Martha said, her bones cracking as she turned Cleveretta's way. "I'm gonna rebuke that demon, right now!"

"I....I....I mean she look....Lord deliver me." Cleveretta shut her eyes with shame.

Missionary Porter just wished they would all keep their mind on the Lord and out of folks' business, but they didn't know how. Their curiosity and fear gave them a fever. They had to figure things out. All of them stood for a long time yapping, trying to find the answer for why Mary and Lou could set foot in First Bible Way Baptist when everybody in Cotsville knew they was living like a husband and a wife in their mobile home just up the road near where the train runs.

Mother Martha strutted over, the feather in her large Sunday hat flickering nervously with each step.

"Bless His name, Missionary, and how you girls doing? Reverend sho preached this morning, didn't he?"

"Sho did!" Missionary exclaimed. "I'm glad my girls came with me this morning."

"I see the two of y'all still together."

"Always gonna be", Lou blurted angrily.

"Come on back anytime; there's always room at the cross. Jesus saves, you know."

With that Mother Martha turned around and went. Lou's face got red and Mary's smile began to fade. Gardenia and Magnolia snickered while Cleveretta and Teresa nudged each other in satisfaction.

Missionary Porter was disturbed. "Sometimes the folks in Cotsville was as backwards as a jackass", she thought. She grabbed Mary with one hand and Lou with the other and led them quickly out the church door. There was a quiet between them. Mary never let her tears fall. Lou's head pounded with the anger and Missionary studied what to say.

"Let me tell you something about church folks, little girls. Y'all still my girls, ain't ya?"

Even Lou managed to nod yes.

"Margaret learned me that there's many folks in church, but the church ain't in them. See that Martha, with the feather in her hat? She wouldn't get into heaven if her daddy owned it

and them other four, they so heavenly bound they ain't no earthly good."

The sun was shining so bright, the warmth soothed their bodies as they stood holding hands on the stone steps of First Bible Way Baptist.

"Y'all girls remember what I told you about Margaret how she learned me many things. For 15 years she was my teacher and I studied real good under her. Me and Margaret wasn't always welcomed every where we went either. Being two women caught up like that, not everybody accepted us.

"There's gonna be many Marthas along your way. We just overcome them with our testimony.

"Margaret told me one she preferred sinners to saints and I ask her why. She say, 'You always know where you stand with a sinner; you can trust a sinner, but not a saint. They'll lie to you in Jesus name and forsake you, too. A sinner usually mean what he say about you.'

"Now don't you girls go thinking that the church belong to them , it don't. It belong to you. You got a purer heart.

"You know sometimes I miss Margaret. Especially when I don't know what to say. It was the funniest thing. After Jesus, she was the greatest blessing of my life."

Lou was still down right agitated. Even the sun couldn't ease her too far down. Mary tried to cover her saddness by looking away up the road near the tracks where their mobile home sat.

They all better be lucky that it was Sunday, and God was a good God, and that Lou had some respect for Missionary Porter or there might have been a scandal in that sanctuary. Lou is known to act out, especially when it comes to Mary and the love she had for her. Many a time, Mary had to pull Lou in the other direction to keep her from tearing someone's behind out the frame.

Missionary Porter felt the heat of Lou's temper. "Girls, we gonna find ourselves another church. We can't stay here no more. Something wrong when the saints miss the mark. Margaret would say, 'Don't get wrapped up.' I think we'd do better if we just forgive them for they know not what they do and go over to the Shoney's and eat at the buffet. They got a waiter there name Lee who'll take care of us real good."

And descending them stone stairs, they did just that. Far as anybody knows, Mary, Lou, nor Missionary Porter ain't never set foot up in First Bible Way Baptist Church from that day to this even when they were invited for the usher board fish fry by the right Reverend Obadiah Wilson himself. And they never say a mumbling word about the 'aints that still go there to shout "Hallelujah!"

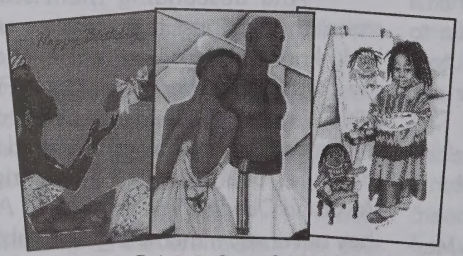
Noted playwright Dr. Shirlene Holmes, is Assistant Professor of Communic-ations at Georgia State University. "Saints & 'Aints" is taken from her collection of 'Cotsville Stories'.

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Tonya Poteat

Age: 25
Hometown: Hawriver, N.C.
Last Book Read: Stone Butch Blues, by Lesly Feinberg
Career: Physician's Assistant
Status: Committed forever

A self described "nerd", Tonya enjoys reading and the mystique of traveling to small towns just to look around.



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RECIPES

By Lois A. Grant

Spring: A Time for Change

As the first signs of spring appear our minds are filled with thoughts of lighter clothing and lighter meals. Today there is a theory that eating fewer calories can increase our longevity. However, when we reduce our caloric intake, we must be sure that we are getting the nutrients our bodies need in order to maintain a healthy life-style. A menu make-over occurs when you take traditional favorites, reduce the amount of calories, fat, cholesterol, and sodium and still produce a meal that is tasty and delicious. Presented below is a sample of a menu make-over.

VEGETABLE LASAGNA

2 cups broccoli flowerets
1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
1 cup thinly sliced yellow squash
1 cup thinly sliced carrot
Vegetable cooking spray
1 1\2 cups thinly sliced fresh mushrooms
1 cup chopped onion
3 cups no-salt-added tomato sauce
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon dried Italian seasoning
1 teaspoon dried basil
3\4 o 1 teaspoon pepper
1\2 teaspoon salt
1 (16 ounce) carton 1% low-fat cottage cheese
1\2 cup frozen egg substitute, thawed
8 cooked lasagna noodles (cooked without salt or fat)
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

Arrange first 4 ingredients in a vegetable steamer over boiling water. Cover and steam 4 to 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender; drain. Transfer to a bowl; set aside.

Coat a nonstick skillet with cooking spray. Place skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add mushrooms and onion; saute until tender. Add to broccoli mixture.

Combine tomato sauce and next 5 ingredients in a small bowl, stirring well. Combine cottage cheese and egg substitute, stirring well.

Spread 1\2 cup tomato sauce mixture over bottom of a 13 x 9 x 2 inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Place 4 lasagna noodles evenly over vegetable mixture. Top with remaining 4 noodles and remaining tomato sauce mixture.

Cover and bake at 350 degreesfor 40 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with mozzarella cheese. Bake, uncovered, an additional 10 minutes or until cheese melts. Let lasagna stand 15 minutes before serving. Yield: 8 servings.

PER SERVING: 234 cal, 3.6g fat, cholesterol 10mg, and sodium 500mg.

Traditional Vegetable Lasagna

PER SERVING: 580 cal, 27g fat, cholesterol 59mg, and sodium 1,365mg.

BANANA PUDDING

2 cups cold 2% low-fat milk
1 1.4 ounce package fat-free, sugar free instant Jello vanilla pudding
16 vanilla wafers
1 large banana
1 cup Cool Whip Lite

Mix milk and pudding according to directions on the box. Line 4 1\2 cup (4 ounce) pyrex dishes (or other 4 ounce bowls) with 2 vanilla wafers, then place 4 thin slices of banana on top of the wafers. Repeat layers with 2 vanilla wafers and 4 thin slices of banana.

Spoon pudding mixture over the banana slices shaking the dish so the pudding flows to the bottom. Fill pudding to about 1\4 inch from the rim of the bowl.

Place 2 tablespoons each of Cool Whip on top of the pudding spread until it covers the pudding, making peaks in the Cool Whip to give it height and beauty. Serves 4.

PER SERVING: 245 cal, 1.5g fat, 10mg chol, 60mg sodium

Traditional banana pudding

PER SERVING: 463 cal, 3g fat, 20mg chol, 410mg sodium

Notice the difference in changing just one meal to a heart healthy meal can make. The total reductions were 830 cal, 36.9g fat, 79mg chol, 410mg sodium. So go out and buy yourself a good light or low-calorie cookbook and start by preparing one meal daily using their recipes and you will be able to see a difference in both the way you look and feel. To get even better results, about one hour after you have finished that wonderful meal, go for a brisk 20 minute walk. Talk about living! Be well and enjoy life to the fullest. Happy Eating!

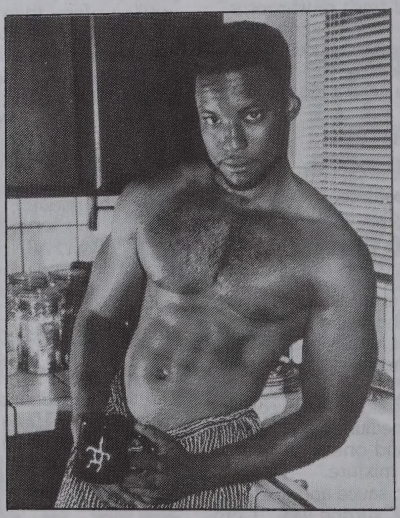
Next Month: Let's Celebrate Easter!

Lois A Grant, B.S., Food Service Management. Former Catering Culinary Instructor. Owner, Grant Foodservices Unlimited.

HEALTH

10 GUARANTEED WAYS TO STAY ON YOUR DIET

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's been munching through winter and fall? If the man in your mirror looks like this guy, then you certainly don't have a problem. If you, like most of us, have been eating your way through the abundance of cold, gray skies, then ten sure fire ways to improve your image are as welcome as thoughts of spring time and the warmth of a sunny day.



The key to staying on any "diet" is to learn to fight those food cravings that lead us directly to the refrigerator searching for left over macaroni and cheese and pound cake. These evil temptations wreak havoc on our most admirable dieting efforts. But fear not: Cravings may be powerful, but they can be overcome. Following are ten proven ways to curb the urge to munch out!

1) Drown you appetite: Drinking generous amounts of water is the number one way to reduce your appetite. Because oceans of water takes up lots of space in your stomach, you'll feel full, which will reduce your urge to eat. Aim to take sixty-four ounces of fluid a day, sipping on a three or four ounce glass at a time.

2) Munch selectively: Nibbling on small amounts of food throughout the day suppresses the appetite more than eating two or three larger meals. Munching on low-fat, high-fiber foods every few hours keeps the insulin levels steadier - and lower - than gorging. (High insulin levels stimulate appetite and prompt fat cells to take in fat molecules instead of allowing muscles to use them as energy.) Munching on carrots, peaches, oranges, pasta, potatoes, and oatmeal will keep your appetite in line.

3) Soup it up: Why is soup so satisfying? Researchers speculate that it takes up a lot of space in the stomach and is high in carbohydrates. Sip soup before large dinners or as a meal itself. Opt for a tomato-based soup; it's less fattening

than cream based soups and mayo-laden salads.

4) Load up on complex carbohydrates: Low-fat, high-carbohydrate foods such as rice, potatoes, beans and pasta, (without butter or sour cream), satisfy the appetite with fewer calories that high-fat foods, primarily be cause carbohydrates are easily converted to glycogen; fat is not, sand stored glycogen, the body's most important energy source, suppresses hunger.

5) Say yes to spicy foods: Mexican, Thai, Cajun and Jamaican cuisines all fill you more quickly than blander foods. The flavor is so intense you don't need so much to satisfy your appetite. In addition, spicy foods speed up your metabolic rate. The faster this rate, the more heat your body produces, and whatever warms you up, slims you down. So stock up on hot peppers, horseradish, chill powder and other spicy condiments and use them often!

6) Feast on fiber: Fibrous foods often require thorough chewing, which slows down your eating, and eating more slowly sometimes means eating less because your body has more time to recognize that it has received ample food. Twenty-five grams of fiber per day is recommended so stock up on barly, corn, oat products, beans, carrots and sweet potatoes and munch on these foods every day.

7) Eat Simply: Serving a wide variety of foods at one meal can cause you to eat more than you otherwise would. In other words, once you've had your fill of roast beef and bread, you may still crave the mashed potatoes and gravy. Limit entrees and side dishes to one per meal. Better yet, opt for a one pot meal both you and your lover can enjoy.

8) Out-exercise your appetite: Got the munchies? Take a walk, ride a bike, or head for the gym. Exercise reduces your immediate appetite by controlling insulin levels in your bloodstream, (steady, lower insulin levels depress the appetite), and by heating the body. (Few people can eat a lot after an intense aerobic exercise.)

9) Ask yourself why you want to eat: Eighty-five percent of us probably have psychological or emotional motives for overeating, and one of the primary ones is stress. If you habitually turn to food to soothe bad feelings, you must develop an alternate strategy to feel better. This means confronting your problem, not feeding it. Anti-stress measures , from counseling to a hot bath, can help you feel better and eat less.

10) Know your triggers: Eating is so dependent on external cues that just seeing food makes us want to eat. To eliminate this problem, bar fattening foods from your home. If your lover or housemate must have sweets, or high-fat foods on hand, ask him or her to hide them from you! Also, keep a record of everything you eat for one week. Write down absolutely everything you eat, why you ate it and why you started thinking about food. (Was it an advertisement, an aroma, an emotion?) Then look for patterns in your responses to certain stimuli. By identifying your appetite cues, you may be able to outsmart a craving the next time it rears its ugly head.

Para Lee McGee is a free lance writer from Hopewell, New Jersey who specializes in health related issues.

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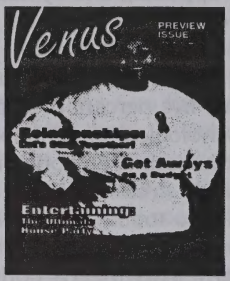

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AGE

18-25 26-35 36-45
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live with lover/rmmate
live on campus
live with parent/s

WILL BUY NEW CAR WITHIN

1-3 mo 6 mo 12 mo. 2 yrs.

FAVORITE TYPE RESTAURANTS

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Italian French Thai
Mexican Jamaican Columbian

WILL VACATION OUTSIDE YOUR CITY WITHIN THE NEXT

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INDENTIFICATION

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COMMUNICATIONS GAGETS OWNED

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pager electronic organizer

FAVORITE MUSIC

jazz hiphop R&B
reggae gospel oldies
classical country rock

FAVORITE SPORTS ACTIVITIES

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bodybldg fishing boating

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

lesbian gay man transgender
bi/female bi/male straight

THE ARTS YOU SUPPORT REGULARLY

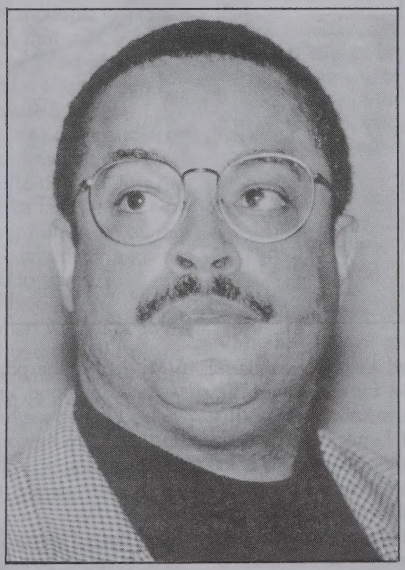
theater dance galleries
musicals readings museums

CONFRONTATION WITH SELF:

A Conversation with E. Lynn Harris

by Douglas E. Jones

His success has been nothing short of phenomenal, documented by his visibility to Black Gay America, Black America, as well as America in general. Best-selling thirtysomething author E. Lynn Harris has captured the minds and hearts of thousands with his books Invisible Life and Just As I Am. In a time when America has been catapulted backwards into the grips of staunch Republican conservatism, Mr. Harris has taken the opportunity to explain the truths of life, of differing realities, possibly opening the door towards the beginnings of community and societal wide healing. The opportunity to tell his story, to explain his truths, has not been without its own unique challenges, but Mr. Harris relishes those memories. He has overcome those challenges and has used the combination of his sales savvy and 'down home' delivery to keep him connected and grounded to his audience. Lynn, as he is known—the 'E' is a secret which he must keep for himself, he notes with a twinkle of mischief in his eyes—has not assumed the mantle of fame endemic to an author who has exceeded anticipated sales of 10,000 books by almost twenty times that amount, with no end in sight. And *this* on the eve of the paperback release of Just As I Am. Recently, he addressed a packed audience at Georgia State University; the bond between he and the crowd was instantaneous and as I searched for a word to accurately describe him the mantra of *'Realness!'* kept recurring in my mind. I invite you to read why.



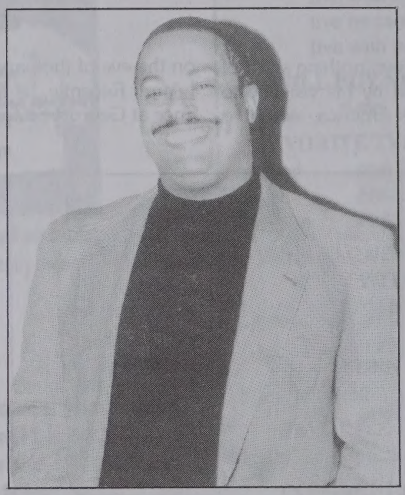
Venus Magazine: When you started writing the books, did you have a target audience in my mind or did you write from personal experience?

Lynn Harris: I wrote the books from personal experience. I didn't necessarily have a target audience in mind. I just knew the truth of what I was writing about.

VM: We've spoken before about the stark nature of the fan mail that you've received relative to Just As I Am. In terms of Black gay men, would you comment on some of those responses?

LH: You know, it's amazing the amount of pain people are in—especially young, Black gay men. One person wrote me and said that he wished he had this book in high school. I've gotten a letter from a professional athlete who wrote me completely anonymously, he

didn't want to use his name—he couldn't afford to 'come out'. But he said that the books [Invisible Life and Just As I Am] have touched him. He said that so much of the books were true and that, even though he couldn't come out, the books have helped him. I answer all of my mail, but I couldn't write him back—he just signed a single name to the letter. He just wanted me to know.



VM: That is so painful when you consider the issue of 'coming out' and the mental and emotional freedom that goes along with it. Certainly, the goal is not for everyone to come out, but everyone should at least have the freedom to do so if that's what they choose.

LH: I agree with you that everyone can't come out, but I think it's a shame because since I've written the book and since I've come out, my life has never been better. There is no pretense, there are no more lies and it's just a wonderful way to live and I wish that for everyone. But, everyone still has to worry about jobs, they still have to worry about family, they have to worry about someone in their life. This is my job now, so I'm not threatened by anyone.

VM: How do we balance those points between family, jobs, and having someone in your life? How can that dilemma be negotiated? How much is 'too out'—how much 'out' can 'out' be?

LH: I think that people can find love while being in the closet, because a lot of Black men are in the closet and somehow we manage to find each other. But, I think that some of the things that lovers enjoy with each other become somewhat restricted. You know, like sharing being in love with your parents, your brothers and sisters, or just the people who are important to you. That is not a possibility if you're in the closet. It also minimizes or negates how many of us there actually are. Recently, a friend—who I've known for a long time—told me her brother came out to her and she was totally in shock. She said she would have never guessed it in a million years and although she was able to accept it because of having known me, *she* thought that maybe *I* was different. But, she saw that this can happen in a family where there is a mother and father, where there is a lot of love, where there are no harsh realities.

VM: The 'American Dream'.

LH: Right. She asked him how long he'd been gay and he said all his life. It shocked her because she finally realized that it wasn't due to some imbalance. You know, I always tell people, 'What do you think? That there's someone secretly taking our little Black boys in the middle of the night and making them gay?' That's not what's happening.

VM: Is that the point of beginnings at which we see Raymond, Jr. in Just As I Am? In Invisible Life we see he starts the process and in Just As I Am he continues trying to reconcile what is going on with Kyle, with what's going in his personal life, with how he's interacting with Nicole.

LH: Yeah. I wanted to see some growth with him, because he's like a lot of people. I still have a lot of friends who are in the closet. The majority of letters I get are from people who are in the closet. They just need someone they can talk to—the pain, you can almost feel it in the letters. Where do they go? It's really difficult because there really is no place for young, Black gay men and lesbian women to go. Our community isn't organized; there's no safe haven. The White gay community is definitely not a place where we can find a permanent home.

VM: Because of the challenges of racism.

LH: Right. You know, home should be a place where you feel completely safe and completely at *home*. And we may not feel that in the Black community as a whole because they don't understand us. Then, when we go into the White gay community, there is that problem of racism, be it overt or subtle.

VM: How can we bridge that gap? If the Black community is homophobic, where is our opportunity for healing?
LH: I don't think that the Black community is as much homophobic as they are uneducated and uninformed. The opportunity is for more people to share their lives with their families, with their churches, with those people who are important to them, then people would see that this is not something that people would willy-nilly go out and choose. Most of the Black lesbian and gay people that I know don't fit those stereotypes which cause fear in our community. If people were more honest and open about who they are the community would see that . *That* is what I tried to do with Just As I Am; if you have any kind of faith, if you have any kind of backbone, your *faith* tells you that God made you in your own image and that you really have to be true to yourself.

When this is all over—when we are dead—it really won't matter what you thought of me. What will matter most is what I knew to be true about myself and what God already knew. And how I lived my life. And how I lived my life. *And how I lived my life.* If you're living your life in the closet, I'm not saying that you're living a lie, but you're not really living your life.

There's so much difference in what a 'gay life' is, I mean, what is that? Just live your life the way you see fit—but, be comfortable with it, don't restrict your life and don't live your life in fear.
VM: You touched briefly on the need for Black gays and lesbians to share with our churches and spirituality is a strong theme in Just As I Am. Are you a member of New Birth Baptist Church?
LH: I'm getting ready to move my membership.
VM: So, it's true—that the church is fostering a homophobic environment?
LH: Well, yes, Pastor Long said something recently in *Newsweek* or *Time Magazine* that really unnerved me and the last time I was there he was preaching on it. It seems like there's been a change because when I first started going there, I thought it was a wonderful place and I felt like the spirit was there and that there was a lot of love there. But, lately when I've gone I've felt this homophobic, hate, kind of atmosphere, so I am not going back there anymore and I'm going to move my membership. I'm really having a big battle with church right now because I think church should be a place where we preach love and the churches are not. They are absolutely not. My faith is stronger now than its ever been and I don't need human beings to dictate to me how I should be.

Church should be a place where we get love, where we go and celebrate the love that Christ has for us. It's become a political thing, it's become something that it should have never been. I'm looking for a place where all they preach are the teachings of Jesus Christ and love. And I really have a problem with the fact that so many gay brothers and lesbian sisters just sit in these homophobic churches and allow that stuff to go on.

VM: In terms of ground level acceptance of self, as Black gays, what are we doing to ourselves that will not allow us to come into each others' spaces when we are trying to build relationships.
LH: A fear of really revealing ourselves. It boggles the mind the way we treat each other—the way we have such unhealthy relationships. It's because we have no role models [in the context of being gay], we have no one to look up to and we run whenever there's a real risk of intimacy. Basically, I think it's because of how we're taught and how we're raised as men—gay men are no different from straight men in that respect. The same that Black women are crying about, Black gay men are crying about in terms of their treatment of each other.
VM: Do you consider yourself a role model?
LH: No.
VM: Why not?
LH: Simply because I think people need to

find their role models at home.

VM: But, when you talk about structuring the reality of a Black gay man and him not having anyone to look up to, you're in a prime position to be that person.

LH: I accept it only if people realize that I'm human and that I make mistakes, that I'm not perfect, and that I'm still a work in progress. A role model in the sense of offering encouragement? Yeah, because I answer every bit of mail that I get—I don't give a form letter. It's getting overwhelming, but I still take that time because people write me and they share so much of their lives with me. I can't ignore that. It's funny, I've been thinking a lot about my grandmother, who just passed, and she always thought that I would be a minister or something and in a lot of respects I do feel like Christ is working through me. I ask myself, why me? I'm no different from anyone else, why am I getting this opportunity? There have been a few letters which really do make me cry, because people talk about how much I've helped them and I don't know what I've done. I've just basically given what I have learned to be true about myself and what I have learned to be true about life. So, I do take the designation of role model with a good deal of apprehension.

VM: The're numerous stories describing your challenges in bringing Invisible Life to the market place. Are publishers finally recognizing the potential of their Black gay and lesbian readership? Are there more opportunities for emerging Black lesbian and gay writers?

LH: I hope so. I definitely hope so. I think publishers have seen, with myself, with James Earl Hardy [author of *B-Boy Blues*], that those stories are definitely marketable and that we're looking for stories about ourselves. Publishing is a very closed society. Even for those who get in, you've got to make sure your publisher is behind you and will make a commitment to getting your book out there and getting you the same opportunities that other authors get. Even with the number of Black authors—both gay and straight—that are out there, there is only a small percentage of them that are getting the dollars behind advertising and marketing. I've been very blessed at Doubleday. I couldn't have found a better home, but that's not everyone's situation. Publishers are going to have learn about the diversity of our issues. E. Lynn Harris' story is not the only story out there and what I've done is to show that there is a market for our kind of stories.

VM: What are your expectations of Black lesbians and gays as we move towards the objective of establishing a visible and viable Black gay community?

LH: I think it has to start with a oneness of self and then move to community. I just don't see a cohesive unit anywhere—in terms of the Black gay community. There are pockets of people trying to do things, trying to make changes, but no one has really captured the masses.

VM: You have success, you are recognized, what's important to you right now?

LH: Well, I realize that it's people who are my employer—the people with whom I come into contact everyday. I have to make myself accessible; I have to be out there talking to folks and answering their letters. If I took the high road and said, 'Well, I don't have to do this anymore,' I would be right back to where I started. The one thing that I prayed for after I prayed for success was to remain humble. I don't want to ever forget what a blessing this has been for me; it's not because I'm a great writer—it's just because this is my time. And there will be other people after me and I hope they respond to success in a similar way. To me that's the most important thing: That I stay grounded and that I not think, for one second, that I'm better than anyone else.

VM: What's in the future for you? Can we expect to hear anymore about Raymond, Jr.?

LH: You know, I was thinking about him today—wondering how he's doing. I think he and Trent are going to be happy. What I'd like to do with him in the future is to show his entire growth and to show that he's comfortable with himself and in a stable relationship. That's something that people have asked me to do: Try and provide some guidelines for a successful relationship. I think we could have successful relationships if we could be completely honest with ourselves and one another.

VM: So, that's the message—it starts with self.

LH: It starts with self.

VM: Thank you for your time and your example.

LH : You're very welcome. Thank you.

REVIEWS

BOOKS

LAUGHING IN THE DARK: FROM COLORED GIRL TO WOMAN OF COLOR
by B.J.

This is the story of the author. Patrice Gaines, who is introduced to us as a black girl who feels powerless, attempts to gain power through the men in her life.

Teenage pregnancy, marriage to someone who is not the father of her baby and deceiving her in-laws into believing their son is the father are just a few of the mistakes she makes early in life. Her father's inability to express his love for her is a major factor in her decisions to continually choose men who use and abuse her.

Patrice gives us a painful but honest look at her life while struggling to survive in a world where she believes her strength comes from the men she loves. She is raped, introduced to drugs by these men and finally finds herself imprisoned because she carries drugs for her man. But despite these painful events, this book is far from depressing. It is empowering, inspirational and hopeful because she survives and, with the help of a therapist, learns to love herself. The message of self-empowerment through self-love is one that can never be heard too much. We are shown that despite living in a society where sexism, racism and homophobia are all too common, self-love is the key to unlocking these chains and is vital in destroying self-hatred!

Gaines states that she wrote this book for "those young sisters" she witnessed on her newspaper beat. However, this forty plus lesbian found it to be a source of inspiration and empowerment. Her message of self-love has something to offer everyone of us regardless of age, race or sex and is a message we all vitally need to hear and hear and hear again. LAUGHING IN THE DARK is a book that reminds us that no life is so hopeless it cannot be saved.

PLAYS

"SENSUALITY"

Sisters of 30 Something Special presented Think It's Not When It Is, Inc., a female theatre troupe from NYC last month at the West End Cultural Arts Center. Shame on you if you were not in the mix. The girls had it going on! These four seasoned professionals presented true to life black lesbian day-to-day drama in a way that was real, but not abrasive, funny but not ridiculous, and delivered a powerfully, upbeat message that left a packed house full of gorgeous women high on a cloud of black lesbian esteem! Our hats are off to promoter, Tracy Fields, for a first class job well done!!

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

Tina Divore

Age: 41

Hometown: Tallahassee, Fla.

Status: In a relationship for about three years

Former Titles: Ms. World, Ms. Atlanta, Ms. Hotlanta

A legend in her own time, Tina Divore is one of the classiest performers to ever grace the stage. She sends a positive message with each performance and handles her audience with such ease and warmth that you can't help but feel connected to her very soul. "I have a great faith in God and I guess that comes across in what I do." As show director at the Armory in Atlanta, Tina Divore is a dance down memory lane for those of us who have enjoyed her for years.

THE *earl* GARDEN

MON - FRI
BAR BRAND SPECIAL
TUES
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PROGRAM DIRECTOR NEEDED:

Responsible for overseeing all client services, housing, volunteer management and prevention education programs. Experience working with people of color, people living with HIV/AIDS, gays, transgender, lesbians, bisexuals. Minimum of three years administrative and supervisory experience, five years employment in HIV/AIDS related field, MSW preferred. Send resume, cover letter and three references to: Rudolf H. Carn, AESM, Inc., P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

HOUSE MANAGER NEEDED:

Responsible for residential operations, implementation of the residential program and developmental/administration of the residence. Experience developing and managing social service programs for gay/bisexual men and lesbians. Experience in HIV/AIDS disease and nonprofit organizations preferred. Send resume, cover letter to: Delores Rollins, AESM, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E

HIV/AIDS OUTREACH WORKERS NEEDED:

Late evenings and nights (20 hrs/wk) to conduct outreach to patrons of black gay night spots, will train. Persons should be comfortable with frank talk about HIV/AIDS & Sex. Please send resume & cover letter to: AIDS Education/Services for Minorities, P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337. AESM is an E.O.E.

LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR NEEDED

Must have truck or van and be physically able to lift 25lb. boxes. Part time position. 622-8069, Venus Line.

PROOF READER NEEDED

Volunteer needed only a few hours every month to review text before publication. 622-8069, Venus Line.

OLYMPIC-SIZE VICTORIAN

Two-story, stucco exterior, three bedrooms, two full baths, A/C, gorgeous oak floors throughout, fabulous winding staircase, stained glass window, loaded with character, off street parking, deck! Only minutes from the opening ceremonies! $125.00. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

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This Victorian on the park is an excellent home for the most meticulous buyer. Glamorous entrance foyer, gallery style central hall, seven transoms, four fireplaces, gleaming heart pine floors, A/C, privately fenced lot. $135,000. Call Charlene (404) 627-0520

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First home? This intown bungalow could be just the ticket! Two bedrooms, one bath, huge screened in porch, fireplace, built-in book shelves, gorgeous yard, off street parking. Reduced to $54,000. Call Charlene: (404) 627-0520

BUSINESS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR TAX CONSULTANT

By Syles Williams

If that old shoe box is empty or just became a place to put those receipts you didn't know what to do with, or that new file box you purchased last year as recommended by your tax preparer is still in the cellophane, or you haven't emptied your purse yet, or that junk drawer that you can hardly open now just seems too overwhelming to tackle, you may want to use the following checklist as a guide to prepare yourself for getting ready to see someone like me, your PERSONAL TAX CONSULTANT.

1. Copies of last year's tax returns (Federal, state, local). (Legible, please.)

2. All W-2s, 1099-Rs, interest and dividend earned statements, social security benefits statement, and any other statement of income earned or unearned. (If you received a statement, believe me, IRS got a copy first.)

3. Labels and envelopes from your Federal, State and local booklets. (Using these pre-addressed labels expedites the processing of the returns for quicker refunds.)

4. Refund statement of state or local 1993 income taxes. (You may or may not have to report your previous refund(s).)

5. All **compiled** business, rental, or farm income and expense documents. (That extra brown bag or shoe box will cost you.)

6. All documents regarding any property or stocks sold during the year. (In addition, what was your cost basis in these items sold? The reaction to this question is awesome!)

7. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION statement. (I know you didn't think you had to pay taxes on this money, after all, you were unemployed. Sorry. It's taxable.)

8. Closing statement for any realty property purchased or refinanced during 1991- 1994. (You may have a refund coming from those seller-paid points.)

9. CHILD CARE provider information. Name, address, identification number of provider and amount paid. (This deduction may be disallowed if the information is not provided.)

10. A CHECK FOR THE PREPARATION OF YOUR TAX RETURN. (A BIGGER CHECK IF WE (TAX PREPARERS) HAVE TO FIND ITEMS 1-9 IN THE BROWN BAG OR SHOE BOX.)

Now, if all else fails, you could purchase one of those tax programs and do it yourself, or you could let IRS prepare them (returns) for you. Well, in either case, would you know that you are getting all the breaks that are available?

In the event that I don't see your smiling face in my place, here are a few

tax tips for you and/or your tax preparer.

1. The basic earned income credit for 1994 is available to Taxpayers with qualifying children and Taxpayers without qualifying children. To qualify, your income must not exceed: $23,754 if you have one qualifying child, $25,295 if you have two or more qualifying children, $8,999 without any qualifying child.

2. Educational expenses (tuition, books, travel, seminars) to improve your present skills or to maintain your present job, may be deducted, if you itemize your deductions.

3. Casualty losses (flood, fire, theft, etc.) that exceed 10% of your adjusted gross income are deductible providing certain requirements are met.

4. Contributions of $250 or more at any one time, cash or non cash, requires a written acknowledgement from the donee organization on or before the date the return is filed.

5. If a chemically dependent person gets treatment at a therapeutic center (drug or alcohol abuse center), the costs of the care, including room and board, are deductible as medical expenses. Mileage to AA or DA meetings are also deductible.

6. The portion of the legal fee for advice on the tax consequences of the divorce is deductible.

7. Job seeking expenses, (travel, transportation, resumes, etc.) are deductible even though job placement was unsuccessful.

8. Your dependent family member living with you last year could very well qualify you for head of household status if you are single and other requirements are met.

9. Taxpayers who underestimate withholdings or estimated payments by ten percent or more may be penalized. Be sure of proper withholding on second jobs and all employee distributions from profit sharing and pension plans.

10. Always keep tax returns, receipts and tax supporting documents for at least 5 years. Be sure to sign, date and mail all returns by April 17, 1995. Also be sure to include social security numbers, form numbers and years paid, on all checks submitted to IRS or state and local authorities.

Well, now that you have become an instant tax expert, you might be ready to crunch those numbers, take an aspirin, or leave all tax preparation to the TAX PREPARERS!

GOOD LUCK AND HAPPY BIG REFUND!!

God Is Love

(404) 763-2149

SYLESTER WILLIAMS
&
ASSOCIATES

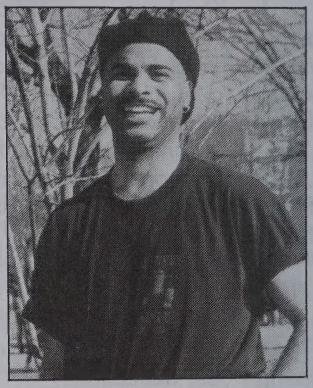
ACCOUNTANT
FINANCIAL & TAX CONSULTANT
Enrolled Agent With IRS

2714 HOLLEY COURT
EAST POINT, GA 30344

PROFILE OF A MAN

Willie Broussard

Age: 28
Status: Single
Hometown: Port Author, Texas
Career: Reservation supervisor, and bartender - Back Door Pub
Last Book Read: "In Search of Satisfaction", by J. California Cooper



Willie resides in our nation's capital and is Hospitality Chair of the 1995 Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Day, Inc. in Washington, D.C. He enjoys black novels, jazz, gospel, soft soul and reggae. He governs himself in the philosophy of being help to others.

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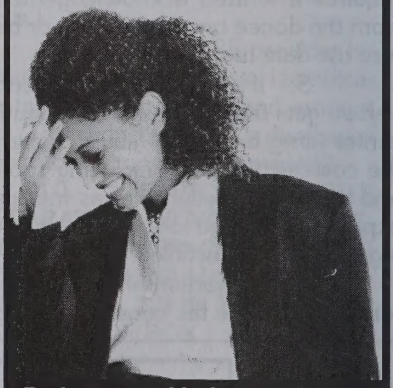

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Gay Spirit Visions Presents
Our Second Annual Spring Gathering
for Gay and Bisexual Men

Spiritual Vision is one of the most empowering aspects of a healthy, fulfilling life, and one of the most important gifts Gay men can share with each other and the world.

Join us in a day of spiritual exploration and weaving.

Our process involves sharing at many levels and includes large and small group interaction, discussion, facilitated movement, ritual, various workshops, a heart circle, vegetarian lunch, and an evening party.

The day is brought to you by our Gay Spirit Visions community, part of our ongoing exploration which includes an annual Conference in Highlands, North Carolina. We welcome newcomers as well as previous participants.

WHEN: Saturday, April 1, 1995. 9:30AM - 6:00PM
WHERE: Friends Meeting House
Party 8:00PM - Midnight. Location to be announced
COST: $30 preregistered by March 25. $35 at the door.
No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

Send registration fee to:
GSV/Spring Conference
P.O. Box 339
Decatur, GA 30031-0339
For more information call Todd at 284-4286.

Make plans now for the sixth Gay Spirit Visions Conference, **September 21 - 24, 1995**. *Awakening the Elder Within: A Journey of Soul*. The Friends Meeting House is located at 701 W. Howard Avenue in Decatur.

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EDUCATION

SISTERLOVE

AIDS is a serious problem for women. Women who are sexually active and/or are active drug users are a great risk for HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), the cause of AIDS. Women who are infected with HIV need comprehensive support, treatment and care. To take care of ourselves and our families, we must become educated about the risks and effects of AIDS. Women should also be supported in their daily lives as they live with this disease.

SisterLove, Inc. is a nonprofit organization established to provide education and support for women by women who are at risk for or are already infected with HIV or have AIDS. While we recognize and address the needs of all women, African-American women, the most affected population among women with AIDS, receive particular attention within all our culturally appropriate programs.

The LoveHouse Supportive Living and Love Works day Activities Program includes housing, support groups, case management, daily workshops and seminars, outings and retreats for HIV+ women. Both programs currently have space available. For more information on how to apply, contact Annette Dufau at (404) 696-1350.

Founder and director Dazon Dixon was presented with the Fund for Southern Communities' annual "Touchbearer Award". This prestigious award is presented to an individual in recognition of their superior effort for grassroots social change. The recipients reflect the strength and diversity of the movement for social change in the South. Congratulations to Dazon and thank you for your strong example.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN METRO ATLANTA OVER:

54% OF ALL AIDS cases are BLACK; 67% of ALL BLACK MEN WITH AIDS are GAY or BISEXUAL. AIDS IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG BLACK MEN AGES 25-44.

Join us in the fight against HIV/AIDS! Our primary focus is gay, black men. We provide support through nutritional counseling, housing assistance and placement, bar/club outreach, support groups, financial assistance, and safer sex workshops for AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

AESM is on the PROWL; and we're coming to your neighborhood!! As of yet, there is no known cure for AIDS. Our purpose is to assist and educate those who have been and are at risk of being infected with HIV. AESM's Board of Directors, Staff, and Volunteers are driven by the love and concern for our brothers and sisters with this motto: "We Love You, Love Yourself...BE SAFE..."

If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:

AIDS EDUCATION/SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM)
1432 Donnelly Ave., SW Atlanta, GA 30310 (404) 753-2900/4300

EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH

2

New York - Wow Cafe, in association with Kaleidoscope Theatre, presents three plays in one show! "Revolutionaries", "The Break", and "Crib". March 2 - 4, 1995, 8:00 p.m., $8.00. 59 East 4th St. Call (212) 460-8067

3

New York - G. Wells & Associates presents the Dynasty Affair. Dress to impress; Brooklyn. Contact Bobbie Moore, (301) 596-6167

9

New York - A working conference on Black Gay & Lesbian, Transgender people of African Descent presented by the Graduate School & University Center of City University of New York, Room 404 North 33 W. 42 St., NYC, N.Y. Speakers include Angela Davis and Essex Hemphill, and others. March 9-11, 1995.

10

Los Angeles - At The Beach...ATB, presents the 2nd anual Las Vegas Turn Arround! March 10-12, $80.00. The Saturday night Party in Vegas will be hosted by 4 of a Kind. Call (213) 969-1619

11

New York - The Four Seasons social Club presents a Dinner Dance at Micky Alan's Showboat, 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. After five attire. 814 Jamaica Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. Open bar, $50.00; hold tickets for after party at Edie's Place! Tilden Ave. at 31st St.. For ticket info call Mary at (718) 453-1267

14

Atlanta - Women in music/Atlanta presents "Women with Aids Benefit Concert" at Eddie's Attic; 8:00 p.m. 515 McDonough St., Decatur. The concert benefits SisterLove and celebrates Women's History Month. The 1995 Women in Music Calendar will be on sale!! (404)377-4976

15

Atlanta - SisterLove presents Shay Youngblood's "Talking Bones", a Lorraine Hansberry Award winning play about three generations of Black women who listen to the voices of their ancestors. 8:00 p.m., Horizon Theatre; $12.00 (404) 753-7733

16

New York - Fearnot Productions presents "Dot's Pocono Weekend". Sold out!! March 16 - 19, 1995.

18

Atlanta - AIDS 101 Awareness action seminar will be held Covenant Presb. Church, 2641 P'Tree Rd., 8 a.m. - 5:30 $15.00; lunch & childcare provided, call Aid Atlanta (404) 885-6800

19

Atlanta - Spring Fling dance by Sisters of 30 Something Special, 4-10 p.m. Club Oxygen (404) 997-6240

APRIL

8

New York - Annual Black and Gold Affair is sponsored by Simplicity Attractions Unlimited of New York. 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. The Marc Ballroom, 27 Union Square West between 15th & 16th St., New York. After Five attire, $30.00. Contact Bess Knowing, (718) 992-9073

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MARCH

2 • Salute to Zora Neale Hurston by Alma Vineyard of Clark University at Charis Books & More - 7:30 p.m.

3 • The River's Edge Campground presents an open house party. All are welcome. For info/directions call (706) 213-8081

4 • Positive Black Lesbians United meet for a fun night of bowling at Express Lanes - 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. (404) 874-5703

5 • Mark Louganis will sign his new book, "Breaking the Surface" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. 931 Monroe Ave.

6 • Brother's Back-2-Back meets to rally HIV/AIDS support primarily for men of color EACH Monday evening, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756- 9202

7 • Care Time, a care givers support group meets EACH Tuesday evening, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.. These are ministers, counselors, doctors, directors, and other workers. Our Cousin's house, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

8 • Friends assemble men and women who are HIV+ EACH Wednesday and Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave. (404) 756-9202

9 • The Natural Healer's Network, Inc. presents Aromatherapy; "Gateways to Renewing Our Lives". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium, 6:45 p.m.

10 • Sisters of Thirty Something Special discuss "The Effects of the Ex", 7:00 p.m. At Revolution on Pharr Rd., (404) 997-6240

11 • Open House - Donor Appreciation Day at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave., 2:00 - 6:00 p.m. (404) 758-9202

12 • E. Lynn Harris will read from and sign "Just As I Am" at Outwrite Bookstore and Coffeehouse at 7:30 p.m.; 931 Monroe Dr., Atlanta

23 • The National Healer's Network, Inc. presents "Healing Relationships". Fulton County Public Library, main auditorium, 6:45 p.m.

25 • Safer Sex for Us...Women! A discussion sponsored by Sisters of Thirty Something Special, 7:00 p.m. at Revolution, Pharr Rd.

28 • Jackie Woodson, winner of two Library Association Awards, reads from "Autobiography of a Family Photo". Charis Books and More, 7:00 p.m. 1189 Euclid Ave.

30 • Sybil Washington & Angela Parker will read from "It Happens". (child sexual abuse). Important discussion follows. Charis Books and More, 7:30 p.m.

31 • Sister Bowl at Express Lanes, 7:30 p.m., Sisters of Thirty Something Special, sponsors.

31 • African American Outreach, meeting at Aid Atlanta, call for details. 872-0600

31 • The High Museum of Art & Image Film & Video presents filmmaker Lucy Massy Phenix in person. 8:00 p.m. (404) 352-4225

APRIL

1 • Gay Spirit Vision presents Our Second Annual Spring Gathering, 8:00 p.m. (404) 284-4286

The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE OTHERSIDE	1924 Piedmont Rd. (404) 875-5238	Wed.	Women 50% Men 50% Show	House R&B
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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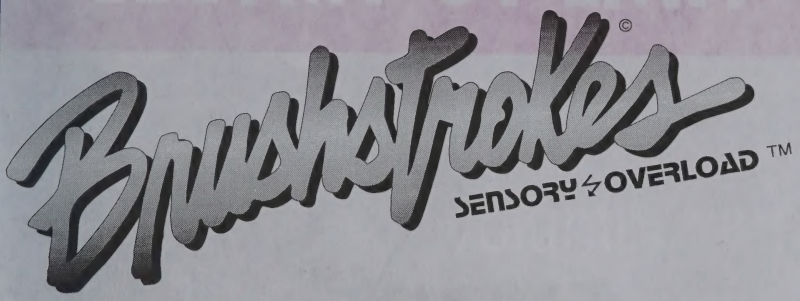
ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 659-5251
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBL), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, (404) 370-1392

OUT & ABOUT
sbians



is proud to be Atlanta's ONLY Gay & Lesbian Variety Store. For 6 years, we have given gay and lesbian Atlanta a place to express ourselves. Don't be exploited by businesses only interested in your money. In these political times, we have the opportunity to make a statement with our voting power and our money. Spend gay dollars wisely. Support businesses that support you!

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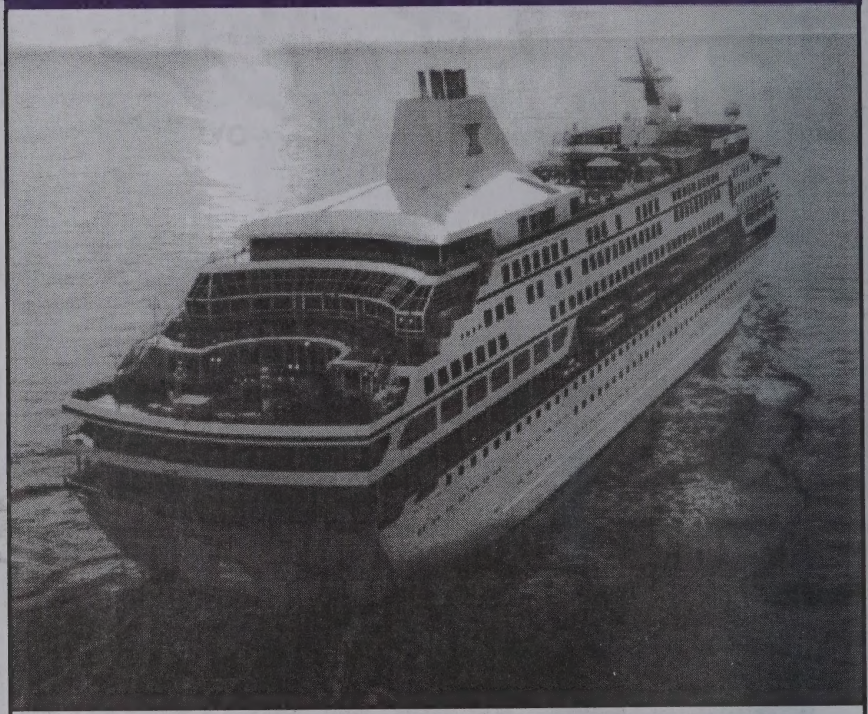

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RIO MALL
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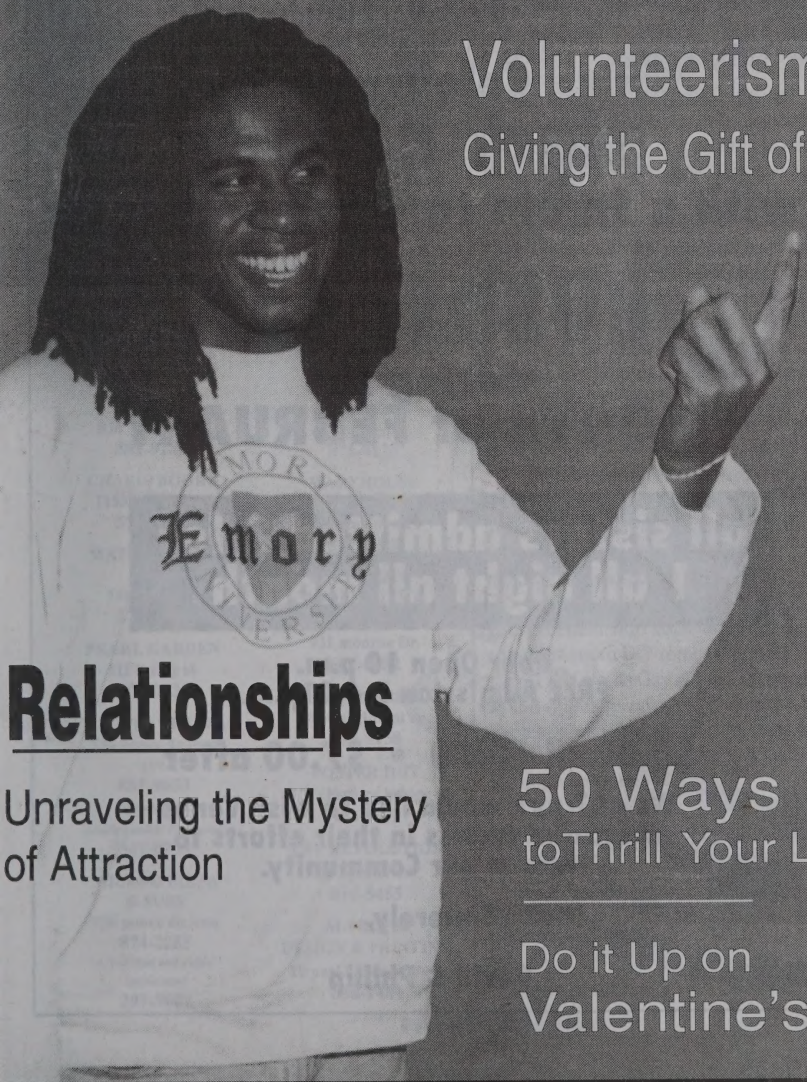
A Magazine for
Lesbians & Gays of Color



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We at Traxx would like to wish Venus Magazine success in their efforts to inform our Community.

Sincerely,

David & Phillip

Relationships

Listed below are some of the places you can pick up your FREE copy of Venus Magazine

OXFORD BOOKS
306 pharr rd.
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OXFORD BOOKS
2345 peachtree rd.
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876-6567

BURKHARTS
1493 piedmont rd.
872-4403

ARMORY
836 juniper st.
881-9280

CHARIS BOOKS
1189 euclid ave.
524-0304

WATERWORKS CAFE
111 luckie st.
577-7059

PEARL GARDEN
111 luckie st.
524-0036

TIME TO TRAVEL
736 ponce de leon ave.
881-9653

RIO MALL
(inside Lambda Pharmacy)
347-9738

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736 ponce de leon
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s. hairston and redan (stone mtn)
297-9007

SEVANANDA
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AIDS EDUCATION SERV.
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SISTER LOVE,INC.
763-7733
1432 donnelly ave.

CHAOS at NIKO'S
655 highland ave.
681-1681

LORETTA'S
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874-8125

WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)
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OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEEHOUSE
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607-0082

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1924 piedmont rd.
875-5238

POSTER HUT
2175 cheshire bridge rd
933-7491

THE REVOLUTION
293 pharr rd
816-5455

M-PRINTS DESIGN & PRINTING
10 park place, suite A
658-1441

EDITOR'S NOTES

Now you've got us Really excited!

You're response to our premier issue has been absolutely overwhelming! Everywhere we go folks are reading and sharing Venus. Some of you have shared us with friends from coast to coast! We're getting calls and letters from New York, Los Angeles, Bermuda, D.C., Birmingham, and Chicago!

You Really like it!!

More than just liking the magazine, many Gays & Lesbians of Color have expressed how much this type information is needed in our lives on a regular basis. That's why we're so elated to bring you our February Issue!

The spirituality section is filled with enlightening affirmations which are certain to lift you, no matter what your traditional belief system. The relationships article feels more like taking a course; So be sure to take good notes!

Our feature article tackles the issues surrounding volunteerism in our community.

Noted playwright, Dr. Shirlene Homes, allows us to visit Cotsville, where a romantic folks story is told of lesian love in a southern town.

Our health expert discusses aids and the African-American lesbian, and our therapist answer an anonymous letter dealing with the frightening spread of AIDS by an emotionally reckless individual.

We are absolutely committed to bring you excellent info each month. We need your commitment to DO something with it!

If we, as Gay & Lesbian people of Color, would share this information in our homes, social circles, and work places, we can become the catalyst for a healing process which will deliver our entire culture.

So dig in, my brothers & sisters, then share Venus with the world!

Editor
Charlene Cothran

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I wanted to be one of the first to congratulate you on a job well done with the premier issue of Venus Magazine. I stumbled across the magazine New Year's night and quickly scooped up several copies to send to friends who live out of state. Thank you for making sure the memory of our friend, Venus Landin, lives on.

I fully understand the level of energy and committment it takes to produce a quality magazine such as this. What you and your staff have put together is very neccesary and nothing short of exceptional. I have searched for many years to find a publication that speaks to my mind, body, and soul as a Black gay man. I think I've found it!

In Our Circle of Love,
Patrick Bell

Dear Editor,

I was invited to Atlanta to attend a Second Sunday meeting for gay men of color One of the most significant occurances on that Sunday was my being introduced to the first issue of Venus. Although I consider myself "culturally aware", I have never been exposed to such a wholesome magazine in my life. I found that Venus was OUTREACH, and that it addressed all aspects of my being. In other words, I have often read significant magazines and publications addressing arrays of being Male. At other times I have found good publications addressing arrays of being African-American and Male. Very seldom, however, have I encountered publications addressing the needs and concerns of being African-American, Male and Gay. I applaud you success!

Through my exposure to Venus and Second Sunday, I feel more empowered to search for the wholeness within my innerself.

Bruce Benton

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Venus™
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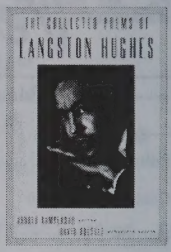

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Bessie Smith

Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1894. When, in "Foolish Man Blues," Bessie Smith sang, "There's two things I don't understand; / That's a mannish-actin' woman, and a skippin', twistin' woman-actin' man; she wasn't the least bit puzzled! She was a good friend of male-impersonator Gladys Fergusson and had been introduced to the world of women-lovin' women by the blues singer Ma Rainey. Among her many gay male friend was composer Porter Grainger. Bessie herself slept with as many female members of her performing troupe as she could. So never belived that the songs an entertainer sings are necessarily true to their own lives. They're just part of the act, that old show-biz scam.

(Courtesy of "The Gay Book of Days")

SPIRITUALITY

How do I Love Me, Let me count the ways.

Kamau Ifoma

1. I love me for the very breath that I take. Knowing that I am continuously replenishing myself with the essence of all life. And as I exhale I give back to the universe the essence of myself.
2. I love me for the joy that I am able to express just by being. With the understanding that I am a miracle in expression, I am always excited about being exactly who I am created to be.
3. I love me for the gifts that I express. I am created with many talents and abundant wisdom which I share with myself first.
4. I love me for the ability to see life as a journey. Each experience provides me with an opportunity to learn and grow.
5. I love me for the honesty which I share with myself. I have no secrets which keep from me.
6. I love me for the choices that I make. I am in complete charge of my life and all of my experiences.
7. I love me for knowing that my life is important and has meaning. It is important to me! I mean it.
8. I love me for the moment. Each and every moment provides me with a new opportunity to love me. My love is eternal.
9. I love me for being. Who and whatever I am, this is who and what I am.
10. I love me just for the sake of loving me. The more I live, the more I love and the more I love, the more I live. My living and loving must first be expressed to me. This is a concept that many of us are aware of and yet have only a superficial understanding of what it really means. To love oneself means to accept yourself just as you are. It means to be proud of yourself just as you are. It means to never experience loneliness as long as you have you. It means to make choices for you first. It means to give to and of yourself just for the sake of giving. It means to remove all conditions placed on your love. It means to love you just for the sake of being you.

Once upon a time we lived in a world where

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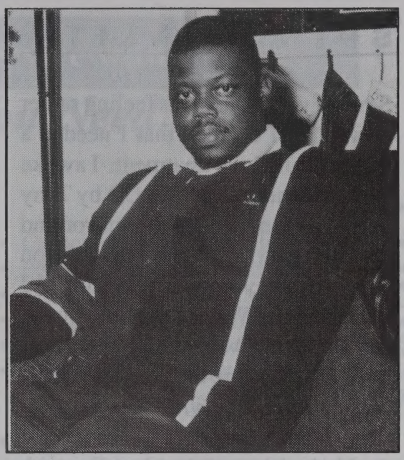
SPIRITUALITY

we only expressed from the intuitive nature built into each of us. There was such a strong connection with God and Its creation that we were absolutely able to express all the qualities of the God which created us. The essence and energy of all these qualities is love. It was this loving energy which was able to build pyramids and create sciences without the aid of machinery or computers. It was this loving energy which built great civilizations, communities and families. These were our ancestors who understood their connection to the Divine Creator. It was their love for all of life which prepared a planet for all of us to live and prosper. The love which they expressed for their God and themselves far outweighed any judgement, criticism or dislike that anyone else might offer.

Susan Taylor writes in her book, *In The Spirit;* "Each of us is a perfect and powerful child of god, a holy light. But because we've forgotten this truth, we feel separate from God and we experience the pain and confusion of feeling vulnerable. We mistakenly believe we are incomplete. And so our energy is focused on "fixing" and trying to change ourselves and others in unimportant and unrealistic ways.

PROFILE OF A MAN

NAME:
Douglas E. Jones
AGE:
26
STATUS:
Single
HOMETOWN:
Brooklyn, N.Y.
CAREER:
Novelist
LAST BOOK READ:
B Boy Blues
by James Earl Hardy



Doug, will soon complete his upcoming novel, *The Male Club.* This fascinting story kept an eager audience spellbound as he read from his work in progress recently at Atlanta's Charis Books & More. Look for an excerpt of *The Male Club* in our March issue.

Then life becomes a frustration rather than a fulfilling experience. The absence of loving attitudes and practices is at the root of all our troubles."

In our Afrikan American Gay/Lesbian and Transperson community the absence of an awareness of the love which we were created to be is as evident as the melanin in our skin. We have so clearly been given and then accepted so many reasons to not love ourselves. It is imperative that we now decide to define who we are and then express this. As individuals as well as as a community. It takes work to find ways to "read" someone for what we perceive as their faults. It is easy and natural to just allow our loving energy to just express. Without condition. This must first be done to the man/woman in the mirror. We have to make efforts to stop being our best critics. We must always know that right now where I am, I am the BEST ME THAT I CAN BE!

During this month of February, the month of love and the month of affirming our Afrikan American heritage, I challenge each of us to take the opportunity to make outward gestures of love to ourselves first.

Don't wait for someone else to send you a Valentine or a box of chocolates. Send it to yourself, first. Treat yourself to a romantic, candlelight dinner. Get in the mirror and sing yourself that favorite love song.

SPIRITUALITY

Several years ago I was feeling rather down. So I decided that I needed a serious daily love treatment. I awoke every morning and put a CD by Tony Terry. I then went to the mirror and began to sing..." When I'm with you I wonder why people just stop and smile at you. When I'm with you the sun shines my way and baby its rays of light will shine on everyone in the world, when I'm with you. It's for real, what I feel. It's ok, everyday. And baby it's so right when I'm with you." Within a couple of days I was back on top of my world. By the end of the month I had conquered the rest of the world. Don't worry about feeling a little whacky in the beginning. I guarantee the results if you continue the treatments consistently, daily for 1 month. And don't just stop here. This should become a lifetime, life changing experience.

Loving yourself is a way of life. It is you, your mindset, who allows Love to express or who blocks its existence. You cannot choose whether or not love is in your life. What you can choose is whether or not you are able to experience it. YOU are the LOVE which God created. Embrace, hug and hold on to Love. I Love Me! I Love Me! I Love Me!

We are committed to providing effective HIV prevention to Atlanta's Gay Community. We need your input. A collaborative effort in the development, content, and direction is essential to the success of our programs.

Please join us in an open forum to determine the direction and support of a new gay outreach initiative!

Wednesday, February 15th, 1995
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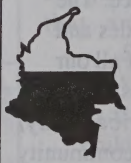

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Mary and Lou

Mary and Lou were bulldaggers. I can't say it no plainer than that. Everybody in Cotsville, from the front of the town to the back, knew Mary was a woman to her heart, but Lou had mannish ways. Lou even looked like a man with her plaid work shirt on and muddy construction worker boots.

It made Mother Martha's flesh crawl just to think about it. "How in the world could two womens get together like that. She didn't like to mind people's business, but there was some things that even God don't like and that woman-for-woman mess was one of them things."

Clevertta didn't like them either and she would get on the phone with Teresa and talk loud about how Mary and Lou "was living in sin and God was gonna clean their playhouse up one of these days." Teresa said, "yes, chile, we can't have that around here with our children watching." They both spent long dimes talking about how they wondered what bulldaggers did in bed. Clevertta say, "I can't be AC running on a DC current; give me a man. Two of 'em if you got 'em." Teresa say, "I know what you mean, girl. All a women can do for me is point me to the nearest man; shit, I wanna be satisfied, not frustrated."

Mary and Lou had long got over worrying about what people think and say. They had been together ten years. They had stuck it out and moving to Cotsville wasn't gonna change them none. Lou knew when she was a girl that sex and men don't mix. She had a Jamaican boy once and when the bleeding stopped, that was it. It was much harder for Mary at first. She had been married twelve years with one daughter and it took a lot to change her mind. What she liked about being with Lou is that she could be close to her and not be afraid. Something special about talking to another woman, there's so muchyou don't have to explain. Loving a woman outside the bed was easy for Mary, but when it come to getting in the bed with a woman, that was the hardest thing to do for a long while. When she and Lou got together the first time, you couldn't tell Mary that God wasn't gonna set them on fire right in that bed. But it never happened.

For a long time Missionary Porter kept telling everybody, the two were just friends. But wasn't no way in hell Magnolia and Gardenia, the Flowers' twin girls, was gonna believe that Mary and Lou was just just friends. Magnolia say they was "Soddom and Go-morrah people and they going to hell sure as you're born." Gardenia say, "Now, come on, sister, God got more sense than that. He's gonna leave them right here so we can see how not to live." Mother Martha would just shake her head and mumble about how queasy her stomach got every time Mary and Lou walked by.

Sometimes Lou and Mary wondered

why in the hell they moved to Cotsville anyway knowing how much people hated them. They had put their mobile home in that town just till they could get their money together; that was five years ago. They kept saying they was gonna move, but every time spring come, they love the place more and more. Not for the people, but for the trees and grass and lazy dogs that came and sit in their yard each day.

When they needed a laugh, Mary and Lou would stop and talk about that get-acquainted barbecue they had when they first moved to Cotsville. They wanted people to see they was normal and nice. Several folks came to that Fourth of July cook out and ate like pigs. Mother Martha stuffed herself so full, Clovis Jr. had to hold her steady as she waddled home. Clevertta sniffed all the food before she ate it just to make sure it was sanitary. BettyLou wouldn't even use the restroom; she walked all the way home and had to pee so bad when she got there, she could almost taste it. Mary and Lou knew it was the itch of their curiosity that drove everybody to the Fourth of July affair. They gave up on the people of Cotsville and decided to stay to themselves.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care what they was doing. "They was Jesus children and she didn't pay people in Cotsville no mind." Mildred kept telling the Missionary that she'd "get a nasty woman's disease if she went in that trailer and used the toilet." But Missionary paid Mildred no never mind and pressed her way. Joe Kellum put out in the streets that Missionary was "one of them thespian women" and had a sweet thing in St. Louie. This was a bold faced lie cause Missionary didn't know a living or dead soul in that city.

The first time Missionary knocked on the door to the mobile home, Lou wondered what in the hell did this old woman want. She wasn't in no mood for no he say-she say shit nor was she ready for another Jesus sermon. And she wasn't gonna put up with no interrogation, not today.

Mary jumped up to tidy things though the house was clean as a church. The smell of corn bread came in before Missionary Porter did. "Thought you sweet girls would want some of my bread. There's a pound of butter in it." Lou was softened by her 70 year old face. "Thank you, ma'am, "Mary said taking the bread to the kitchenette. Missionary Porter continued:

"I'm glad to find ya'll home. I didn't have your number to call. I hope you don't think I ain't polite cause my mother raised me right."

"That's alright Mrs. Porter," Mary said. "Call me Missionary, baby, that would mean the world to me."

None of them could think of a word to say, so they sat there, the fan whirring, and ball game playing quietly on the radio.

"Can I offer you lemonade, Missionary?" Lou asked.

" Yes,baby, My whistle is a little dry; I could appreciate that now.

Is that made from that resubstituted stuff or the real thing?"

" It's the real thing", Mary offered trying to comfort.

They sat and sipped and each stared in a different direction. After about 20 minutes, Missionary pulled herself from the chair and headed home. The rest of the night was full of expectancy as if something had not come out or been said. Lou stayed up late warring inside. Mary went to bed but the covers entangled her like two great arms and shook her restless. They were scared to touch the cornbread. Mary finally broke down and Lou ate from her mouth. It was the best they'd ever tasted.

Missionary knocked seven days later, mopping her forehead with a hanky that had lace all around the rim. "Girls, I'm glad I could get back to see you. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes," Mary said smiling, giving into the old woman. Lou just nodded in

See Page 33

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

NAME:
Tabitha

AGE:
24

STATUS:
Single

HOMETOWN:
Philadelphia

CAREER:
aspiring singer

TAB enjoys reading music and eating out at her favorite restaurant! She feels it is important to live everyday to the fullest!

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BUSINESS

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DIVORCE

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq.

Carl was smiling as he drove home that evening. He always smiled after meeting Jack. He looked forward to their meeting each week for days. As he drove into his driveway, his smile faded. He knew Diane was inside waiting. He knew he was living a lie but felt trapped. "I know I am gay but I can't leave my wife. If I divorce her she will find out about me and use it to hurt me."

Carl knew what he wanted, but how could he get it. That night he told himself he would ask for a divorce. He and Diane had been hurting each other too long. They both wanted to end the marriage but neither would take the first step.

Carl knew he had to.

DIVORCE. It still strikes terror in the hearts of many. Even thorough the rate of divorce has climbed steadily in this country over the last decade, the notion of divorce still runs counter to our culture's sense of success. We all know the story. We go to college, find our true love, get married and live happily ever after. No wonder people who divorce feel the way they do.

The feelings of loss, failure, fear and confusion are compounded where the basis of the divorce is one of the parties' "coming out."

As an attorney who has represented gay and lesbian clients in their divorce proceedings involiving their striaght spouse, there are several issues to be recognized and addressed.

The first issue involves the decision to come out. Many clients ask if they should tell their spouse before the divorce. I usually advise them not to. If both parties have decided a divorce is what they want, coming out before the divorce would only complicate issues. In all divorce cases, grounds for the divorce must be alleged.

While adultery, mental and physical abuse, abandonment and others are recognized grounds for divorce in Georgia, I always recommend citing irreconcilable differences as the basis whenever it is possible. Citing irreconcilable differences avoids the need to produce evidence to support any of previously mentioned grounds. Thus a gay or lesbian client need not fear evidence of homosexual orientation being introduced.

Where grounds must be cited, issues of fault and the need to punish the offending party become factors. For the gay client, there is a real challenge present to avoid their being treated harshly. This is particularly true where the issue of alimony, child support or visitation are concerned and you have a gay client who has come out prior to finalizing the divorce.

Even when there are grounds for divorce other than irreconcilable differences, a client can still achieve success by addressing the second issue -- the divorce settlement or agreement.. When the parties reach agreement on as many issues as possible, they maintain control of the outcome.

In order to reach an agreement, there must be a willingness to communicate, negotiate and above all compromise, In most cases the two parties' main goal is to survive this time with some degree of dignity and sense of equity. I counsel my clients to avoid allowng emotions get in to tthe way of reaching a fair outcome. Issues of child custody, visitation, child support real property, (your home, car, jewerly), and personal property as well as division of liabilities, (paying off the bills you made together), are always best decided between the parties and their counsel.

Leaving it up to a judge to decide almost always results in none being happy. A negotiated settlement avoids that possiblity. Once presented to the presiding judge, settlements are rountinely incorporated into the final order of divorce. In most instances the settlement is the core of the final order. Communication and a willingness to negotiated and compromise are the keys to success. Have a successful divorce.

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq., is an attorney in private practice in the Atlanta area.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN METRO ATLANTA OVER:

54% OF ALL AIDS cases are BLACK; 67% of ALL BLACK MEN with AIDS are GAY or BISEXUAL. AIDS IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG BLACK MEN AGES 25 - 44.

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If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:

AIDS EDUCATION/SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM)
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EDUCATION

OUR COUSIN'S HOUSE, INC.

Our Cousin's House, Inc. is a non-profit organizationwiththe following mission statement:

"We will enhance the quality of life for people of color living with HIV/AIDS by providing comprehensive housing in a caring environment".

Our family consists of a board of directors,and a host of volunteers to accomplish this objective . We have secured a property, we are renovating it , and worked in a planning session that produced an organizational chart, an action plan, our immediate and long term finanical needs, and a"wish list" of equipment and items we need to operate.

We need your help! In addition to securing monetary donations, we will be contacting agencies, businesses, churches, and anyone else who can help us in this critical venture.

Not only will we provide housing for residents with HIV/AIDS,we will host support groups, assist in educating the community about the disease and its effects, as well as maintain a extensive service recourse library containing legal, medical, social, and practical information to enrich the lives of the residents and the community.

Let us share some history about the property we chose for Our Cousin's House,Inc. It is located in Atlanta, and is being purchased from a lady who will celebrate her 70th birthday this October. The house was in her family for several decades and has always been a place of refuge, where care and compassion were given to Stewardesses (during pre-fight attendant days), later to house unwed mothers, and most recently a house for elderly ladies.In keeping with this tradition, we are proud to be a part of this legacy.

Projections say that as of January,1994,340,000 in the United states have been diagnosed with AIDS. 1.5 million are infected with HIV. Other statistics state that by the year 2000, there will be 20,000 AIDS orphans who's parents have died and more than 4,000,000 women will have died from AIDS. Although frightening, until there is a cure we will probably all know someone who has been infected by this disease.

Anything you can do to contribute to Our Cousin's House,Inc. can be used to help make a positive impact in someone's life, by educating family members and the community as well as providing a home where people are treated with love, compassion and dignity. For more information on how you can help,please contact a board member or volunteer of OUR Cousin's House,Inc. at 1023 Dill Ave. Atlanta, GA 30310-9998 (404) 756-9202.

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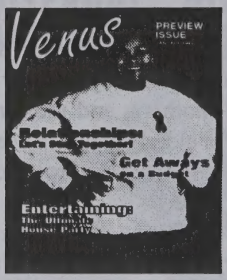

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RELATIONSHIPS

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF ATTRACTION

Ulester V. Douglas

"According to recent data, heterosexual divorce rates appear to be increasing. More than 50 percent of first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce. Also, 67 percent of all recent marriages do not make it.

What about Black gay and lesbian relationships? What is our "divorce" rate? I am not aware of any "divorce" statistics on our relationships and I do not believe that any exist. One possible explanation for this void is that our committed relationships are not legally sanctioned. There is no consensus on an operational definition for what constitutes a "marriage" and thus a "divorce".

I would speculate that we have a higher rate of failed relationships than heterosexuals. This is due partly to homophobia, external and internal, and the absence of social institutions and rituals that support our relationships. I am not familiar with any models that address the nuances of Black gay and lesbian relationships. However, there are models that can assist us in understanding and improving our relationships.

In my experience, the most conveniencing and credible of these models is the Imago relationship therapy model. This model was pioneered by Dr. Harville Hendrix of The Institution for Relationship Therapy in New York. I will discuss the basic assumptions and implications of this model. Also, I encourage you to learn and utilize it in evaluating and understanding your relationships. It should be clear by now that we need much more than love to make our relationships work. The model's basic premise is that our unconscious agenda for wanting and having a committed relationship is to heal our childhood wounds. The assumption here is that regardless of how effective our caretakers were in their parenting, none were perfect thus, to some degree, we are all wounded.

Apparently, the unconscious attempts to re-experience the state of wholeness that we had when we were in our mother's womb. In order for this healing to take place, we have to find someone who is capable of healing those wounds. This person, whom the unconscious seeks, is a collage or compilation of the positive and negative qualities of our caretakers in other words our Imago.

Caretakers are anyone who was influential in our upbringing, especially during our early development. Because parents are usually our caretaker's, our Imago is likely someone who has a combination of those positive and negative traits. Yes, unconsciously what we are really looking for in a partner is someone who is, fundamentally, a combination of our caretakers' personality. Not very romantic is it?

This contradicts our conscious agenda which is more idealistic and tends to focus on physical and social characteristics. For example, when asked, what we are looking for in our partner, we might mention his or her height, age, education, butch/femme, top/bottom, etc., in other words, the kind of information that we would read in the personals. Sometimes the conscious and unconscious agendas co-exist and we may get the best and worst of both worlds. However, it appears that more often than not, there is a clash between both agendas and the unconscious usually prevails. Therefore we find ourselves in a relationship with someone who is the opposite of what we say we want. This person is likely to be very different from us; the relationship tends to be intense; conflicts are highly charged; and the sex "great". If the conscious were to "win," that is, we resist our unconscious agenda, we would likely end up with a person more like us, someone who would usually make a good friend. This is the kind of person we wished we were attracted to because he/she has so much 'going on,' including the qualities we desire in a partner. Regretfully, a relationship with this kind of person would be one of convenience, void of intensity, passion, and 'good' sex.

What are the implications of this model? How can we apply it to our present or future committed relationships? Some of the implications are: We must be patient in our search to find Mr./Ms. Right, because the unconscious is very selective. Regardless of how much we've worked on our issues, we need our Imago to help complete the process. We need the context of a committed relationship to complete our healing When we find our Imago, we will experience intense pleasure and intense pain. There will be times when we will wonder whether we made the right choice, because s/he will seem so incompatible. Unless the relationship is abusive, hang in there and work through these incompatabilities leaving is not the answer because you'll attract a similar partner and end up in the same situation. Seek professional help if necessary. "Love," as we usually define it, has nothing to do with it. Tina Turner was right. If love had something to do with it, most of us would be happily involved and the rate of failed relationships would not be as high as it is. I propose that we define love in terms of needs. So, when we say we love someone, we're talking about the degree to which that person is capable of meeting our emotional, physical, sexual, and spiritual needs. Thus, the person to whom we're most attracted are those who are most capable of meeting these needs usually our Imago. This is hard work! There are no short cuts to doing the work necessary to experience a long lasting, healthy relationship. Now, how can we apply this to our present or future relationship? A first suggestion is to learn more about this model and its applications. It is more involved than I have presented. To do this, I strongly recommmend reading two of Dr. Harville Hendrix's books. If you are in a committed relationship, I suggest you read, Getting the Love You Want, and if you're single I suggest, Keeping the Love You Find. Of course, you can read both, regardless of your relationship status. Another suggestion is to find a therapist skilled in using this model. Seeking therapy is advisable, especially if you're stuck in a power struggle with your partner. Seeking professional help does not mean we're less of a person or crazy; it's an

indication of our responsibility, of our maturity, and that we're taking care of ourselves. Many insurance plans would cover the cost of counseling. If unable to take advantage of professional counseling, I suggest the following: Determine your Imago. In order to do this correctly, you must be honest with yourself and accurate in the way you perceive your caretakers. Dr. Hendrix suggests that you make a list of the positive and negative traits of your parents and anyone else who strongly influenced you when you were young. Combine these traits. These traits should be how you saw your caretakers and influential others when you were a child, not how you see them now. Use simple adjectives or phrases like: Patient/ impatient, warm/cold, kind/unkind, rigid/ flexible, etc. This list represents your Imago. Make lists of the negative and positive attributes of partners to whom you were strongly attracted and with whom you had a committed relationship. Do this for your present relationship. Again, use simple adjectives and phrases. Compare and contrast these lists. Identify the patterns. How do they comare to your Imago? Conscious work must be done in order to your unmet childhood needs.

If you're in a committed relationship, you may want to share the information you've gathered in steps one through three with your committed partner. of the main objectives of a healthy relationship is thatwe perceive and experience our partner as a source of pleasure. I'm not suggesting that there will not be pain, but that there needs to be significantly more pleasure than pain. Actually, Dr. John Gottman, Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington, conducted empirical research which suggested that the ratio of pleasure to pain needs to be 5 to 1 if relationships are to succeed. Apparently, Dr. Gottman was able to predict, within a 94 percent accuracy which relationships would end in divorce.

Two variables were used to determine which relationships would end in divorce: conflict style and the extent to which couples maintained the ratio of pleasure to pain. I will comment more on this study in a future article. This discussion was not intended to be a substitution for professional counseling. The intent was to introduce a practical effective model which would explain the mystery of attraction and the steps we can take to strengthen our relationships and improve the odds that they will be healthy and long lasting.

Ulester Douglas is a licensed psychotherapist, practicing in the Atlanta area. You may write to him with your questions and comments in care of this magazine or you may fax at (404) 622-8089.

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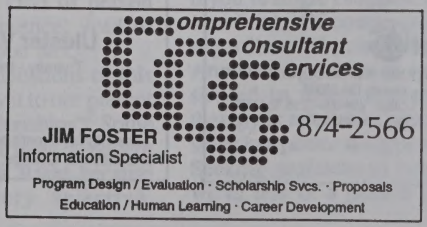
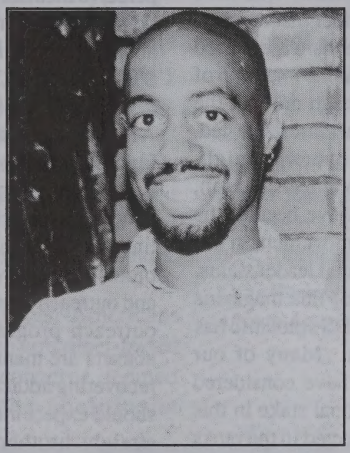


VOLUNTEERISM:

GIVING THE GIFT OF TIME

By Craig Washington

In a society where time is often equated with money, why do some people "give up" their time and energy without "gettin' paid." Are they really that generous? Or do they simply have time on their hands to parcel off to any deserving cause? Is volunteerism influenced by race, class, gender or sexual orientation? Do African-Americans volunteer any more or less than white Americans?



These questions and the myth and speculation they elicit come up often in my line of work. As a program coordinator for a large AIDS service organization, I work with volunteers on a daily basis. I also collaborate with other coordinators within my agency and throughout the community. I coordinate AID Atlanta's African-American Outreach program which targets much needed AIDS awareness and education to our people.

I've learned a great deal about volunteering over the past four years. When I learned of my HIV status, I was challenged by fear, guilt, and shame. Even though I was blessed with many potentially supportive friends, some of whom were AIDS activists, I disclosed to a select few. I eventually joined the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force as a volunteer. Working for the cause of my generation was more fulfilling than I'd expected. The experience enriched my life both as an individual and as a member of the affected community. I was contributing something to my brothers and sisters and that, to me, was "gettin' paid" in full. I was also magnifying my personal blessings, taking control of an adverse situation and turning it into something good. I had a full-time job and volunteered 10-15 hours a week and still wanted to do more.

When I moved to Atlanta in 1992, I started with AID Atlanta as an outreach volunteer.

The theme for 1994 World Aids Day was "family", which was appropriate for our Aid Atlanta program. Our experiences over the past two years have definitely bonded us in a family way. As Aretha once said, "thank you for my good sisters, thank you for my brothers." Two of our brothers Bernard and Ernest were called home this year but still walk with us in all the work we do.

Most of the volunteers are women and gay men. I believe this is fairly representative of overall volunteer trends throughout our society, especially among African-Americans. In my experience, the vast majority of African-American volunteers have been women. This isn't surprising when you consider that much of African-American volunteerism is centered within the church. Look at the make-up of our churches — even though most of the mainstream black churches are male-led, the congregations are overwhelmigly female. Regarding sociopolitical activism, black female volunteers have been at the forefront of every social movement in our history, often without official leader status.

Most of the readers of this magazine already know how the AIDS epidemic has affected black gay men. Many of our brothers who might not have considered volunteering have a personal stake in this cause. This is clearly reflected in the ranks of AIDS workers (volunteered and paid) in Atlanta. Just as gay white men rallied to educate themselves and each other, our gay brothers and sisters must do the same and in doing so, address the collaborative ills of racism and homophobia within the communities to which we belong.

Although a number of black lesbians and gays (BL+Gs) serve as volunteers, the response isn't nearly commensurate with the needs and the numbers infected.

It is alarming to see so few new faces among the ranks of African-American lesbians and Gay men. It means that many of the veteran volunteers will burn out much more quickly. Those of us who are infected are often debilitated by serial illnesses; some of us die, so there is no such thing as too many volunteers.

Many BL+Gs shun any form of activism for fear of being outted either in terms of sexual orientation or HIV status. There are black lesbians who erroneously perceive themselves as not-at-risk and thus do not become involved or even educated about what's going on. AND THE BAND STILL PLAYS ON!!

I don't typically see a large number of African-American heterosexual men involved in any volunteer efforts. It might be that many brothers define their time as synonymous with money and both as limited. There are in fact, some altruistic brothers who serve as mentors, big brothers and outreach workers. Several of the street outreach programs targeting substance abusers are manned by straight-identified recovering addicts. However, we need and should expect more participation from our straight brothers, our elected officials, grass-roots leaders, our pastors and our bourgeois social/professional clubs. ALL NEED TO WAKE UP AND ANSWER THE CALL.

The African-American Outreach (AAO) volunteers have had difficulties in evolving a trusting relationship with the host agency. The Volunteers initially perceived their host agency as unresponsive to the needs of our community. Despite serving a predominantly black client caseload, the agency had not established the history of collaborators necessary to engage the trust of the people. The very concept of African-American outreach had not been duly prioritized despite the changing profile of AIDS. The AAO volunteers demanded support in the targeted literature and public relations

materials. Although we have garnered increased support, several volunteers feel the agency should expand community outreach beyond the activities of one program. Studies have indicated that African-Americans are far more likely to volunteer with predominantly black organizations. As with other groups, many African-Americans are more comfortable working among each other. In legally desegregated society such as ours, social segregation as well as institutionalized racism are still alive and well. In many instances, we find it more approprite to work within our social circles, churches, civic groups, and institutions.

In the past, African-Americans have launched massive volunteer-based programs for social concerns deemed deserving. From the abolitionist movement through Garveyism; from student sit-ins through the D.C. black pride march, we have donated our resources without pay to ensure our survival and progress. Regarding AIDS, we have allowed the confluence of social stigma, homophobia and prudishness to delay/diminish our response to this most ominous threat. We cannot afford to wait for formal leaders to legitimize our mobilization. We, all of us—grandmothers, high school students, buppies and drag queens must invite a roots movement (s) to stem the tide of infection and disintegration of our families, our neighborhoods, our futures, our lives.

Craig Washington is Volunteer Coordinator for African-American Outreach at AID Atlanta.

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PROFILE OF A QUEEN

NAME:
Niesha Dupree
AGE:
29
STATUS:
Single
HOMETOWN:
Greenville, M.S.

CURRENT TITLES:
Ms. Black America
Ms. Gay Pride
Ms. Black World
Ms. Augusta Sweetheart
Ms. Southern Galaxy
Ms. Royal USA

FORMER TITLES
Ms. Gama
Ms. Lorettas
Ms. Black Alabama
MS. Red Rose
Ms. Vogue
Ms. Mid-City
Ms. Festival Newcomers
Ms. Newcomer Intern'l

When a live production includes Niesha Dupree, get ready for a Las Vegas style treat! This queen does 'Eartha Kit' better than Eartha! She is also the new president of the African Family Reunion of Gays & Lesbians, AFRO GALS. Catch her at the Waterworks Cafe, Atlanta on Sunday nites!

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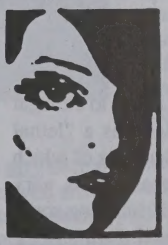

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What's Going On in Your Life?

What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals....

So tell us— What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

The problem is my best friend is HIV positive and participates in unsafe sex with partners who do not know his HIV status. This is not by accident.

Many times I don't hang with my buddy nowadays because of this situation. I don't want to consider myself as an "accessory to murder".

My question is, should I tell these unknowing partners of his HIV status thus "outing" my friend ? Help!

Sleepless in Atlanta

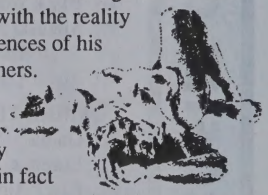
Dear Sleepless,

You are correct as you allude to the legal ramifications of your friend as a "lethal weapon", the legal consequences of which I am not qualified to speak. It is very apparent that your friend is suffering some psychological and emotional disturbances. He is ,obviously, very angry and in a great deal of pain with regard to the reality which confronts him. You are correct in refusing to participate in an environment of negative and dangerous behavior.

He does, however, need a "good friend" at this time.

Serving to warn his various sex partners is an anxiety provoking and insurmountable task you are attempting to bestow on yourself.

Is it your friend that you must first comfort, as best as you are able. It is important for you to attempt to intervene on his behavior, as a friend. First go to him and comfront him with the reality of the consequences of his behavior on others.



Secondly comfront him with the reality of who he has in fact become, a lethal weapon". Also encourage condoms at this time. Next, encourage him to seek counseling and if necessary, go with him to his first session as additional encouragement. He is very confused and lost at this time as anyone would be. Allow him a day, at the very most to process this.

If he is resisting and uncapable of this course of action, you must be a very strong and caring friend and advise him that should he not seek help, you will need to report his behavior to the appropriate organizational body. (The Center for Disease Control would be a likely starting point).

Sensing your personal and moral obligation to your friend, I know this is very difficult. However if all else fails, you have no alternative except to do what you know is emotionally, psychologically, physically, legally, and morally the appropriate imperative.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, PO. BOX 89238, ATLANTA, GA 30312 or Fax (404) 622-8089

H E A L T H

AIDS AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN LESBIAN

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D.

Without question, everyone has heard something about AIDS. We have heard of this disease from so many angles that from time to time we are overwhelmed. We are made to reevaluate life, and encouraged to be non-judgmental. We are constantly challenged to become more educated and provoked to anger when examining high levels of prejudice and denial about the seriousness of this disease.

If you consider yourself "safe" from the threat of AIDS simply because you are a lesbian, then excuse yourself for being sadly mistaken!

Many lesbians have not solely maintained intimate partnerships with only one woman. Hence, any individuals regardless of sexual orientation having multiple partners, exposure to semen, vaginal secretions and blood can increase their risk of infection.

Do not allow your sexual orientation to dictate your level of seriousness regarding the prevention of HIV infection. There are multiple reasons to make HIV/AIDS prevention a part of your daily conscious experience. First, please recognized that no one will take better care of "you" than you. Secondly, if you

are involved in **any** sexual relationship,then you are at risk. Should you be one of millions of Americans who have experienced a sexually transmitted disease, then use that experience as an opportunity to make serious changes in your sexual behavior. Genital Warts, Gonorrhea, Herpes, Non-Specific Urethritis, Non-Specific Vaginitis, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis, etc. have all increased, (not decreased),in men **and** women within the past three years. These increased sexually transmitted diseases indicate the exchange of bodily fluids. Every living human being has within them bodily fluids that are capable of transmitting any pathogen or causative agent responsible for any of the above mentioned sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

African-Americans are steadily increasing in the national percentage of newly reported cases. Transmission rate studies have revealed that infection has increase tremendously among women 21-30 years of age.

Some studies indicate that transmission rates for Black women are 5 to10 times higher then that of their white counterparts. Specifically, African-American women are 13 times more at risk to become infected than white women. An examination of national data provided by the Centers for Disease Control reveals that four out of 5 women who are infected are of childbearing age. As you read this article, women are becoming infected with the AIDS virus!

The reality that lesbians must face is that many lesbians have had sexual encounters, (e.g., vaginal, anal, oral), with someone of the opposite sex!

50 ways to thrill your lover! Do it up on Valentines Day!

A boring date on any other day may be forgiven, but certainly not on Valentines Day. That's time to whip out your most romantic amunition.

If you could send one thousand perfect love doves to deliver one thousand perfect roses to your sweetie you won't have overdone it on this the warmest of days. So if you are high on emotions, but low on ideas on how to celebrate Valentines Day, take some advice from our list of 50 ways to say" I love you"! This year, let your imagination run wild as you plan the most romantic time ever for you and your lover.

1. Relax on a sunset cruise! Call your favorite travel agent and escape on a 3 day ship.
2. Have a catered dinner prepared at home.
3. Enjoy a n Al Jarreau CD and a candlelit bubble bath for 2.
4. Fill your honey's bed with rose peddles.
5. Wrap a hot red G-string in a very handsome box.
6. Have your valentines day card post marked in Valentine,VA.(mail your card in a large self addressed,stamped envelope with a note explaining that you would like your letter post marked. Send it to Postmasters of Valentine,VA 23887-9988.
7. Import his favorite vintage wine.
8. Sing your love a song you wrote this morning.
9. Bring home that cute puppy he's always wanted.
10. Treat her to a pampering all day spa.
11. Join her in a mud bath.
12. Plant love notes all over with clues on where to find the next one.
13. Plan a romantic champagne and cheese picnic in your living room.
14. Sky dive with a sign that says "I've Fallen for you!"
15. Prepare his favorite meal wearing only your red apron.
16. Serve yourself for desert!
17. Give your love a hand made coupon book filled with things you'd do for him all year through.
18. Stuff a handsome bag with sexy silk boxers,sprinkle chocolate kisses on top.
19. Show up for dinner wearing only your pumps and a blue fox!
20. Belly dance for her with a red heart on your naval.
21. Give your man a fruit bath ! melon,kiwi,strawberries,oooh!
22. Rent a cherry red sports car and drive to your special passion place.
23. Write a love poem documenting the evolution of your romance.

The AIDS virus is transmitted primarily through blood, (including menstrual blood), semen, urine, vaginal secretions, or feces.

Lesbians who may be at risk are those who:

1). share needles or any other IV drug paraphernalia (this is the single most important risk category for lesbians)

2). have had sexual contact with individuals who use IV drugs;

3). have sex with people who's sexual history are unknown;

4). used semen for insemination from a donor;

5). received blood a transfusion or blood products between 1979-1985; and

6). share sex toys which maybe contaminated with blood, semen or vaginal fluids.
It is important to consider where bodily fluids containing the AIDS virus can gain entry and make infection possible; vagina, anus, mouth and broken skin.

Should you or any one you know consider insemination to become pregnant,

it is suggested that you incorporate a sound screening technique that includes:

1). a risk assessment of your donor(s) on a case by case basis;

2). getting information about your donor's health, medical and sexual history;

3). asking your donor to take an HIV test at a site that will ensure his anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed;

4). having an antibody test done twice prior to insemination with a period of 3 to 6 months between tests; and

5). requesting any sperm bank or private physician to have sperm tested for HIV.

These are important considerations given many lesbians and gay men have use the insemination and co-parenting process to have a child. You must always examine your behavior and not measure your degree of risk based solely on sexual orientation.

If your orientation involves participation in behaviors that will increase your risk, then by all means begin making a conscious decision to initiate reinforced life enhancing changes. For example, sharing of sex toys should be discouraged. Instead, use two separate devices for each partner. Such changes must become on-going, never to be compromised for anyone.

This article was intended to provide information in a way that would encourage everyone to learn more about ways to reduce risk of infection, It was also intened to increase compassion for HIV positive African-American Lesbians and remind us all that the African American Gay and Lesbian community must continue to embrace its own.

Leonard Jack Jr., Ph. D. is a health and behavior scientist.

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25. Snuggle in a warm sleeping bag in front of a roaring fire.
26. Have flowers delivered 3 times a day!
27. Plan a mystery scavenger hunt that leads up to his favorite restaurant.
28. Reserve a horse drawn buggy and take a evening ride downtown.
29. Cram a pretty bag with all his favorite candy.
30. Dip her toes in melted Swiss chocolate, then indulge.
31. Enjoy a Barry White CD while you practice what you preach.
32. Score big points with your very own Drive-in movies. Set up a television and V.C.R. in your garage and surprise your love when you open the automatic door!
33. Reserve a Champagne helicopter ride along the coast.
34. Enjoy an evening train around the city or all the way to New Orleans and back!
35. Carve your names in a special Oak tree.
36. Dine at the Restaurant where you first met.
37. Arrange for the maitre'd to have your sweeties favorite flowers waiting on your secluded table.
38. Arrange an all day limousine to take her shopping.
39. Give up that credit card for a day!
40. Enjoy an Elegant French restaurant.The beautifully spoken words and delicate seasoning makes one feel extremely intimate.
41. Diamonds still work! Choose a brilliant stone and mount it in gold.
42. Give her a gift certificate to a Topless Maid Service. Spring cleaning will never be the same!
43. Give him a gift certificate to a G-string maid service.
44. Pretend that this is your first date.
45. Take off to New England for a sensational ski weekend.
46. Get down on one knee and pop the question.!
47. Read poetry each other.
48. Give a kitten with a pretty bow.
49. Make a suprise deposit in your mate's account.
50. Give a simply 'I love you!'

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Mr. Melvin

affirmation. The visit was easier. Mother Porter asked them if they wanted to come to revival to hear the Reverend C.W. Gillespie preach. They declined not because they didn't want to, but because they had tickets to the show at the university theatre that weekend.

Missionary left after thumbing through their many photographs and giving Mary plenty medicine advice like: putting an onion in your sock when you have a fever, laying on the Bible to stop a headache and that two teaspoons of white vinegar for each quart of water would beat any woman's disease.

Still the air was full. They shared another heavy night. Lou neither Mary went to work the next morning. They thought maybe Missionary Porter was bringing spirits in or working roots on them; the strangeness of this new relationship was a strain.

Three days later the old woman returned. This time with a sweet potato pie still warm from the oven. When she handed it over, Mary felt like she was receiving a just born baby in a bunting. They cut into it quickly. Lou savored her portion like a woman's breast. Mary was careful not to drop a crumb and even Missionary, who baked these weekly, had to confess she had put a hurting on that pie. After eating, they sighed and sat still. Missionary could be heard rolling an icecube around in her mouth and crushing it between her dentures.

Someone had to speak, she did.

"Baby girls, you all know I'm a sanctified woman."

They affirmed with a nod.

"And you know I'm water baptized, holy-ghost filled and running for my life."

They believed it was true.Something I got to say, been wanting to say it since I been in your place. I wouldn't tell you nothing wrong. I asked God to give me the words to say."

Lou got sour right off cause she knew what was coming. Why did this old woman have to destroy this evening with a sermon, a testimony, a reprimand. She had heard them all. Lou wanted to make the woman quiet up, fill her with more pie, but Mary moved a little closer to her companion and one slight touch stilled the waters.

The confession began:

When I was your age, Mary, I knew a woman name Margaret. She had hair white as a cotton flower and light black skin. And if you'll pardon me, Miss Lou, there wasn't nothing woman about her 'cept the hint of red lipstick she always wore. I don't know why I was drawn to her, but I truly was. She learned me so many things about God and about myself. I don't think I knew anything about myself till I met Margaret. Don't get me wrong; I knew God, but me, I didn't know about me. She learn me that I got every element inside me. I got a shower and I got fire. I got a wind and I got an earth. I believe God sent her to me. She was an evangelist, who made up her mind from the time she was 11 years old that she was gonna live without men and from the moment I met her,I did too. I used to make her sweet 'tayta pie and she read me the Bible. I ain't never heard nothing like it. Seem like those folks in the Bible just got up and walked when she read to me. We'd sit and she'd vision this great ministry she would have. It come to true, I know, cause I travelled with her for 15 years. The last stop was here in Cotsville where after a Sunday evening service, she died in my arms.

The silence in the room go so deep and wide. Mary craved to hold Lou's hand, as Missionary began rocking back and forth, tears brimming but never falling from her eyes. Lou left for the bathroom. When she returned Missionary was finishing her lemonade. The old woman kissed both of their hands and turned to leave. As she remembered, she paused.

"What I told ya'll is nothing to tell others. That's a present for the two of you. "Don't tell things of understanding to a fool." That's what Margaret used to

Cont. From Page 33

say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that. Half the people sending folks to hell is going themselves; hell's gonna be so full, you're gonna need a reservation to get in. I love you girls so much, not just because you Jesus children, but because you done learn how to suffer for what you want. Gods sees and know."

When the door latched behind her, Mary and Lou wrapped themselves together and mixed their tears.

Mother Porter came back often, but this was the visit they never talked about again.▾

Noted playwrite, Dr. Shirlene Holmes, is Assistant Professor of Communications at Georgia State University. Mary and Lou is taken from her collection of 'Cotsville Stories'.

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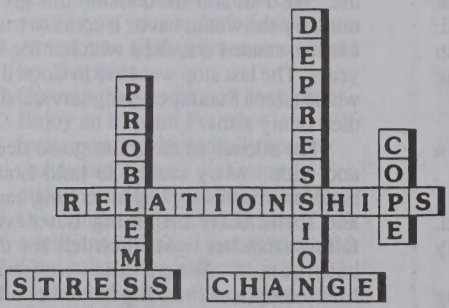

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COMMUNITY CALENDER

FEBRUARY

• 5 •

LOS ANGELES

When Zora met Langston...Productions (WZML...P) presents a dynamic new play called Black Coffee. The show, directed by Antonio D. Le Mons and written and performed by Blaine Teamer, opens at the Hollywood Moguls Thatre, 1650 N. Schrader Blvd., (formerly N. Hudson) at 1:00 p.m., and runs Sunday, February 12, 19 and 26. For Tickets call Theatix at (213) 466-1762

• 11 •

ATLANTA

Think It's Not When It Iz, Inc., a female theatre troupe from NYC, presents "Sensuality". This pre-Valentines' Day sensation is sponsored by Sisters of 30 Something Special in association with Just Us theatre Inc. at the West End Cultural Arts Center, 8 p.m. with a cast Party Immediately following. For tickets call (404) 752-7100.

• 12 •

ATLANTA

Sweet heart Dance Party. Dance to your favorite slow jams.
Club Oxygen, 3065 Peachtree Rd., Buckhead. 4-10 p.m. For more info: (404) 997-6240

• 14 •

Happy Valentine's Day

• 15 •

ATLANTA

Aid Atlanta HIV prevention Open Forum 7-9 pm,
1438 West Peachtree St. (404) 872-0600

• 16 •

LOS ANGELES

The Black Gay & lesbian Leadership Forum presents, The 1995 Summit at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton and Towers. The theme is, "Black Lesbians and Gays: Our Families, Our Communities, Our Lives", February 17-19, 1995. For more info call (213) 964-7820

24 •

NEW YORK

Silk, Satin, Leather & Lace... Productions presents Ski Weekend '95. Feb. 24-26, Eden Resort. Ski, Party, and Shop til you drop! call Rachelle (718) 842-2929.

• 25 •

ATLANTA

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African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change
(formerly Salsa Soul)
(212) 620-7310, Candice
The Gay & Lesbian Center
208 W. 13th St. NY. NY 10011

African America Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA)
(404) 659-5251
Black Lesbian/Gay Rights and Organization.

AIDS Education Services for Minorities (AESM)
P.O. Box 87277
Atlanta, GA 30337
(404) 753-2900,
(404) 743-7733

Asians and Friends/Atl.
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Atlanta, GA 30324
(404) 876-9800
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Black Lesbian Gay Pride, Inc. (BLGP, Inc.)
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Fax (213) 964-7830

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Atlanta, GA 30301-1334
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Atlanta, GA 30301
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P.O. Box 11705,
Atlanta, Georgia 30355

Las Buenas Amigas
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The Gay & Lesbian Center
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Washington, D.C.20026

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National Assoc. Black & White Men Together
1747 Connecticut Ave.
Washington, DC 20020
(202) 462-3599

National Black Women's Health Project
1237 Gordon SW.
Atlanta, GA
(404) 753-0916

Second Sunday Discussion Group
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Sisters of 30 Something Special
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Sister Love, Inc.
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Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance
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Positive Black Lesbians United (PBL)
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Avondale Estates, GA 30002
(404) 250-7950
Positive Lesbians of color exchanging powerful, productive and educational ways of dealing with our every day challenges.

Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino Arts Organization
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Our Cousin's House
Brothers Back to Back
HIV Support Group
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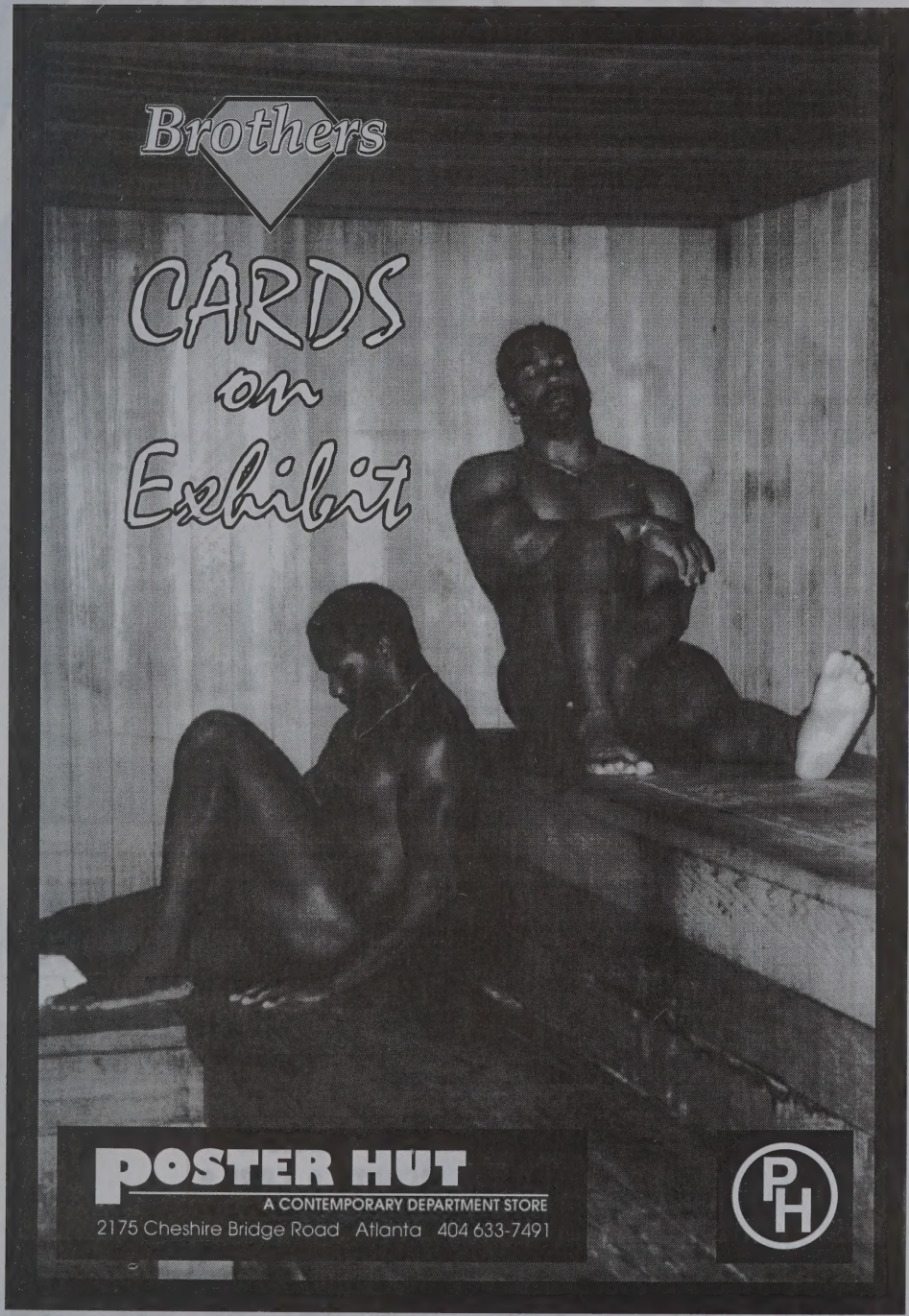
Out & About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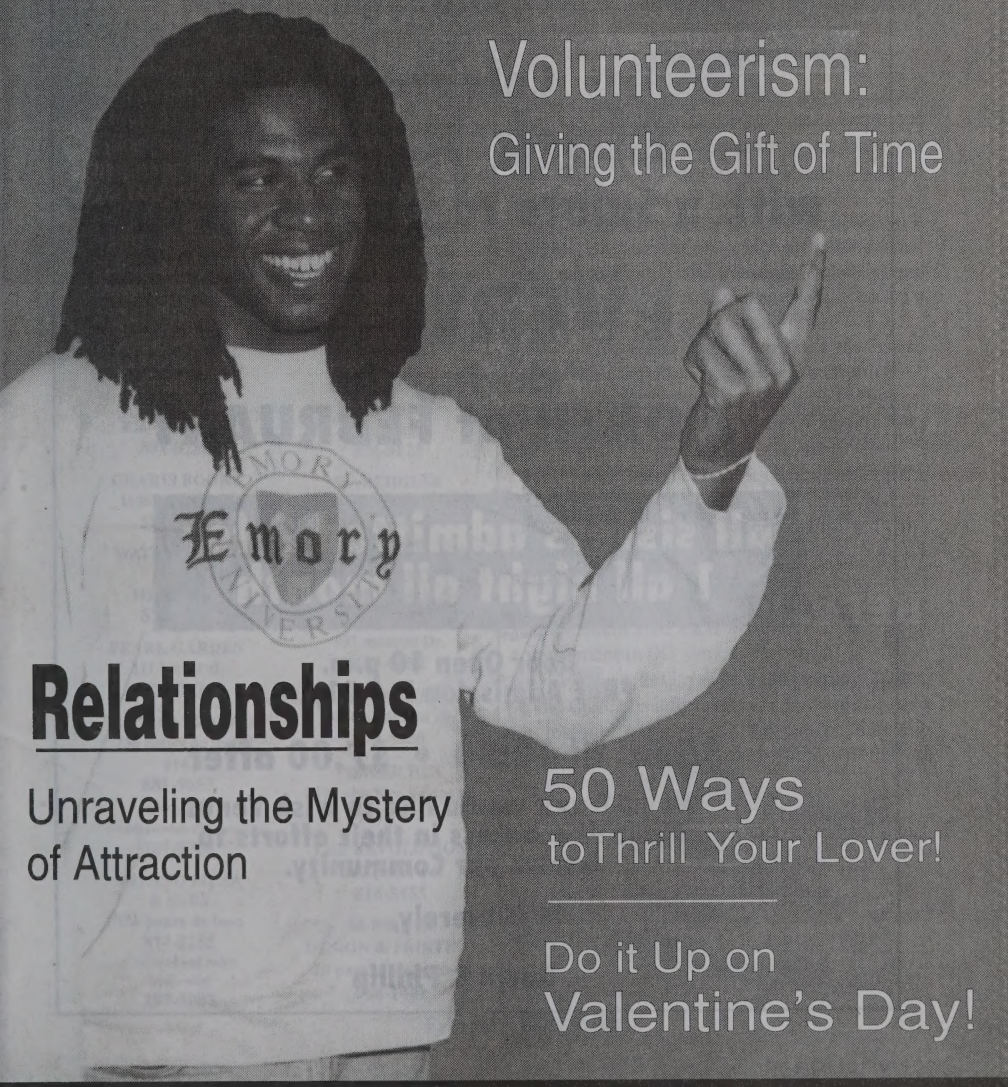

Volunteerism:
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We at Traxx would like to wish Venus Magazine success in their efforts to inform our Community.

Sincerely,

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Relationships

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PEARL GARDEN
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874-2255
s. hairston and redan
(stone mtn)
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658-1441

EDITOR'S NOTES

Now you've got us Really excited!

You're response to our premier issue has been absolutely overwhelming! Everywhere we go folks are reading and sharing Venus. Some of you have shared us with friends from coast to coast! We're getting calls and letters from New York, Los Angeles, Bermuda, D.C., Birmingham, and Chicago!

You Really like it!!

More than just liking the magazine, many Gays & Lesbians of Color have expressed how much this type information is needed in our lives on a regular basis. That's why we're so elated to bring you our February Issue!

The spirituality section is filled with enlightening affirmations which are certain to lift you, no matter what your traditional belief system. The relationships article feels more like taking a course; So be sure to take good notes!

Our feature article tackles the issues surrounding volunteerism in our community.

Noted playwright, Dr. Shirlene Homes, allows us to visit Cotsville, where a romantic folks story is told of lesian love in a southern town.

Our health expert discusses aids and the African-American lesbian, and our therapist answer an anonymous letter dealing with the frightening spread of AIDS by an emotionally reckless individual.

We are absolutely committed to bring you excellent info each month. We need your commitment to DO something with it!

If we, as Gay & Lesbian people of Color, would share this information in our homes, social circles, and work places, we can become the catalyst for a healing process which will deliver our entire culture.

So dig in, my brothers & sisters, then share Venus with the world!

Editor
Charlene Cothran

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I wanted to be one of the first to congratulate you on a job well done with the premier issue of Venus Magazine. I stumbled across the magazine New Year's night and quickly scooped up several copies to send to friends who live out of state. Thank you for making sure the memory of our friend, Venus Landin, lives on.

I fully understand the level of energy and committment it takes to produce a quality magazine such as this. What you and your staff have put together is very neccesary and nothing short of exceptional. I have searched for many years to find a publication that speaks to my mind, body, and soul as a Black gay man. I think I've found it!

In Our Circle of Love,
Patrick Bell

Dear Editor,

I was invited to Atlanta to attend a Second Sunday meeting for gay men of color One of the most significant occurances on that Sunday was my being introduced to the first issue of Venus. Although I consider myself "culturally aware", I have never been exposed to such a wholesome magazine in my life. I found that Venus was OUTREACH, and that it addressed all aspects of my being. In other words, I have often read significant magazines and publications addressing arrays of being Male. At other times I have found good publications addressing arrays of being African-American and Male. Very seldom, however, have I encountered publications addressing the needs and concerns of being African-American, Male and Gay. I applaud you success!

Through my exposure to Venus and Second Sunday, I feel more empowered to search for the wholeness within my innerself.

Bruce Benton

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Venus™
MAGAZINE

January 1995
Vo. 1 No. 1

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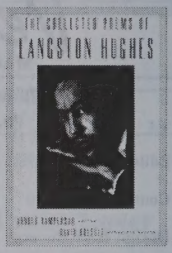

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Bessie Smith

Born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1894. When, in "Foolish Man Blues," Bessie Smith sang, "There's two things I don't understand; / That's a mannish-actin' woman, and a skippin', twistin' woman-actin' man; she wasn't the least bit puzzled! She was a good friend of male-impersonator Gladys Fergusson and had been introduced to the world of women-lovin' women by the blues singer Ma Rainey. Among her many gay male friend was composer Porter Grainger. Bessie herself slept with as many female members of her performing troupe as she could. So never belived that the songs an entertainer sings are necessarily true to their own lives. They're just part of the act, that old show-biz scam.

(Courtesy of "The Gay Book of Days")

SPIRITUALITY

How do I Love Me, Let me count the ways.

Kamau Ifoma

1. I love me for the very breath that I take. Knowing that I am continuously replenishing myself with the essence of all life. And as I exhale I give back to the universe the essence of myself.
2. I love me for the joy that I am able to express just by being. With the understanding that I am a miracle in expression, I am always excited about being exactly who I am created to be.
3. I love me for the gifts that I express. I am created with many talents and abundant wisdom which I share with myself first.
4. I love me for the ability to see life as a journey. Each experience provides me with an opportunity to learn and grow.
5. I love me for the honesty which I share with myself. I have no secrets which keep from me.
6. I love me for the choices that I make. I am in complete charge of my life and all of my experiences.
7. I love me for knowing that my life is important and has meaning. It is important to me! I mean it.
8. I love me for the moment. Each and every moment provides me with a new opportunity to love me. My love is eternal.
9. I love me for being. Who and whatever I am, this is who and what I am.
10. I love me just for the sake of loving me. The more I live, the more I love and the more I love, the more I live. My living and loving must first be expressed to me. This is a concept that many of us are aware of and yet have only a superficial understanding of what it really means. To love oneself means to accept yourself just as you are. It means to be proud of yourself just as you are. It means to never experience loneliness as long as you have you. It means to make choices for you first. It means to give to and of yourself just for the sake of giving. It means to remove all conditions placed on your love. It means to love you just for the sake of being you.

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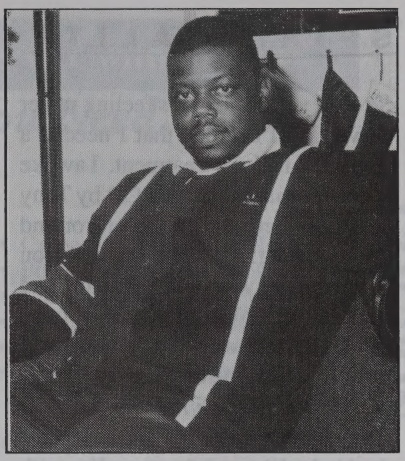
SPIRITUALITY

we only expressed from the intuitive nature built into each of us. There was such a strong connection with God and Its creation that we were absolutely able to express all the qualities of the God which created us. The essence and energy of all these qualities is love. It was this loving energy which was able to build pyramids and create sciences without the aid of machinery or computers. It was this loving energy which built great civilizations, communities and families. These were our ancestors who understood their connection to the Divine Creator. It was their love for all of life which prepared a planet for all of us to live and prosper. The love which they expressed for their God and themselves far outweighed any judgement, criticism or dislike that anyone else might offer.

Susan Taylor writes in her book, *In The Spirit;* "Each of us is a perfect and powerful child of god, a holy light. But because we've forgotten this truth, we feel separate from God and we experience the pain and confusion of feeling vulnerable. We mistakenly believe we are incomplete. And so our energy is focused on "fixing" and trying to change ourselves and others in unimportant and unrealistic ways.

PROFILE OF A MAN

NAME:
Douglas E. Jones
AGE:
26
STATUS:
Single
HOMETOWN:
Brooklyn, N.Y.
CAREER:
Novelist
LAST BOOK READ:
B Boy Blues
by James Earl Hardy



Doug, will soon complete his upcoming novel, *The Male Club.* This fascinting story kept an eager audience spellbound as he read from his work in progress recently at Atlanta's Charis Books & More. Look for an excerpt of *The Male Club* in our March issue.

Then life becomes a frustration rather than a fulfilling experience. The absence of loving attitudes and practices is at the root of all our troubles."

In our Afrikan American Gay/Lesbian and Transperson community the absence of an awareness of the love which we were created to be is as evident as the melanin in our skin. We have so clearly been given and then accepted so many reasons to not love ourselves. It is imperative that we now decide to define who we are and then express this. As individuals as well as as a community. It takes work to find ways to "read" someone for what we perceive as their faults. It is easy and natural to just allow our loving energy to just express. Without condition. This must first be done to the man/woman in the mirror. We have to make efforts to stop being our best critics. We must always know that right now where I am, I am the BEST ME THAT I CAN BE!

During this month of February, the month of love and the month of affirming our Afrikan American heritage, I challenge each of us to take the opportunity to make outward gestures of love to ourselves first.

Don't wait for someone else to send you a Valentine or a box of chocolates. Send it to yourself, first. Treat yourself to a romantic, candlelight dinner. Get in the mirror and sing yourself that favorite love song.

SPIRITUALITY

Several years ago I was feeling rather down. So I decided that I needed a serious daily love treatment. I awoke every morning and put a CD by Tony Terry. I then went to the mirror and began to sing..." When I'm with you I wonder why people just stop and smile at you. When I'm with you the sun shines my way and baby its rays of light will shine on everyone in the world, when I'm with you. It's for real, what I feel. It's ok, everyday. And baby it's so right when I'm with you." Within a couple of days I was back on top of my world. By the end of the month I had conquered the rest of the world. Don't worry about feeling a little whacky in the beginning. I guarantee the results if you continue the treatments consistently, daily for 1 month. And don't just stop here. This should become a lifetime, life changing experience.

Loving yourself is a way of life. It is you, your mindset, who allows Love to express or who blocks its existence. You cannot choose whether or not love is in your life. What you can choose is whether or not you are able to experience it. YOU are the LOVE which God created. Embrace, hug and hold on to Love. I Love Me! I Love Me! I Love Me!

We are committed to providing effective HIV prevention to Atlanta's Gay Community. We need your input. A collaborative effort in the development, content, and direction is essential to the success of our programs.

Please join us in an open forum to determine the direction and support of a new gay outreach initiative!

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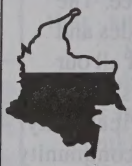

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Mary and Lou

Mary and Lou were bulldaggers. I can't say it no plainer than that. Everybody in Cotsville, from the front of the town to the back, knew Mary was a woman to her heart, but Lou had mannish ways. Lou even looked like a man with her plaid work shirt on and muddy construction worker boots.

It made Mother Martha's flesh crawl just to think about it. "How in the world could two womens get together like that. She didn't like to mind people's business, but there was some things that even God don't like and that woman-for-woman mess was one of them things."

Clevertta didn't like them either and she would get on the phone with Teresa and talk loud about how Mary and Lou "was living in sin and God was gonna clean their playhouse up one of these days." Teresa said, "yes, chile, we can't have that around here with our children watching." They both spent long dimes talking about how they wondered what bulldaggers did in bed. Clevertta say, "I can't be AC running on a DC current; give me a man. Two of 'em if you got 'em." Teresa say, "I know what you mean, girl. All a women can do for me is point me to the nearest man; shit, I wanna be satisfied, not frustrated."

Mary and Lou had long got over worrying about what people think and say. They had been together ten years. They had stuck it out and moving to Cotsville wasn't gonna change them none. Lou knew when she was a girl that sex and men don't mix. She had a Jamaican boy once and when the bleeding stopped, that was it. It was much harder for Mary at first. She had been married twelve years with one daughter and it took a lot to change her mind. What she liked about being with Lou is that she could be close to her and not be afraid. Something special about talking to another woman, there's so muchyou don't have to explain. Loving a woman outside the bed was easy for Mary, but when it come to getting in the bed with a woman, that was the hardest thing to do for a long while. When she and Lou got together the first time, you couldn't tell Mary that God wasn't gonna set them on fire right in that bed. But it never happened.

For a long time Missionary Porter kept telling everybody, the two were just friends. But wasn't no way in hell Magnolia and Gardenia, the Flowers' twin girls, was gonna believe that Mary and Lou was just just friends. Magnolia say they was "Soddom and Go-morrah people and they going to hell sure as you're born." Gardenia say, "Now, come on, sister, God got more sense than that. He's gonna leave them right here so we can see how not to live." Mother Martha would just shake her head and mumble about how queasy her stomach got every time Mary and Lou walked by.

Sometimes Lou and Mary wondered

why in the hell they moved to Cotsville anyway knowing how much people hated them. They had put their mobile home in that town just till they could get their money together; that was five years ago. They kept saying they was gonna move, but every time spring come, they love the place more and more. Not for the people, but for the trees and grass and lazy dogs that came and sit in their yard each day.

When they needed a laugh, Mary and Lou would stop and talk about that get-acquainted barbecue they had when they first moved to Cotsville. They wanted people to see they was normal and nice. Several folks came to that Fourth of July cook out and ate like pigs. Mother Martha stuffed herself so full, Clovis Jr. had to hold her steady as she waddled home. Clevertta sniffed all the food before she ate it just to make sure it was sanitary. BettyLou wouldn't even use the restroom; she walked all the way home and had to pee so bad when she got there, she could almost taste it. Mary and Lou knew it was the itch of their curiosity that drove everybody to the Fourth of July affair. They gave up on the people of Cotsville and decided to stay to themselves.

The only one that befriended them was Missionary Porter who didn't care what they was doing. "They was Jesus children and she didn't pay people in Cotsville no mind." Mildred kept telling the Missionary that she'd "get a nasty woman's disease if she went in that trailer and used the toilet." But Missionary paid Mildred no never mind and pressed her way. Joe Kellum put out in the streets that Missionary was "one of them thespian women" and had a sweet thing in St. Louie. This was a bold faced lie cause Missionary didn't know a living or dead soul in that city.

The first time Missionary knocked on the door to the mobile home, Lou wondered what in the hell did this old woman want. She wasn't in no mood for no he say-she say shit nor was she ready for another Jesus sermon. And she wasn't gonna put up with no interrogation, not today.

Mary jumped up to tidy things though the house was clean as a church. The smell of corn bread came in before Missionary Porter did. "Thought you sweet girls would want some of my bread. There's a pound of butter in it." Lou was softened by her 70 year old face. "Thank you, ma'am, "Mary said taking the bread to the kitchenette. Missionary Porter continued:

"I'm glad to find ya'll home. I didn't have your number to call. I hope you don't think I ain't polite cause my mother raised me right."

"That's alright Mrs. Porter," Mary said. "Call me Missionary, baby, that would mean the world to me."

None of them could think of a word to say, so they sat there, the fan whirring, and ball game playing quietly on the radio.

"Can I offer you lemonade, Missionary?" Lou asked.

" Yes,baby, My whistle is a little dry; I could appreciate that now.

Is that made from that resubstituted stuff or the real thing?"

" It's the real thing", Mary offered trying to comfort.

They sat and sipped and each stared in a different direction. After about 20 minutes, Missionary pulled herself from the chair and headed home. The rest of the night was full of expectancy as if something had not come out or been said. Lou stayed up late warring inside. Mary went to bed but the covers entangled her like two great arms and shook her restless. They were scared to touch the cornbread. Mary finally broke down and Lou ate from her mouth. It was the best they'd ever tasted.

Missionary knocked seven days later, mopping her forehead with a hanky that had lace all around the rim. "Girls, I'm glad I could get back to see you. Aren't you glad?"

"Yes," Mary said smiling, giving into the old woman. Lou just nodded in

See Page 33

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

NAME:
Tabitha

AGE:
24

STATUS:
Single

HOMETOWN:
Philadelphia

CAREER:
aspiring singer

TAB enjoys reading music and eating out at her favorite restaurant! She feels it is important to live everyday to the fullest!

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BUSINESS

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DIVORCE

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq.

Carl was smiling as he drove home that evening. He always smiled after meeting Jack. He looked forward to their meeting each week for days. As he drove into his driveway, his smile faded. He knew Diane was inside waiting. He knew he was living a lie but felt trapped. "I know I am gay but I can't leave my wife. If I divorce her she will find out about me and use it to hurt me."

Carl knew what he wanted, but how could he get it. That night he told himself he would ask for a divorce. He and Diane had been hurting each other too long. They both wanted to end the marriage but neither would take the first step.

Carl knew he had to.

DIVORCE. It still strikes terror in the hearts of many. Even thorough the rate of divorce has climbed steadily in this country over the last decade, the notion of divorce still runs counter to our culture's sense of success. We all know the story. We go to college, find our true love, get married and live happily ever after. No wonder people who divorce feel the way they do.

The feelings of loss, failure, fear and confusion are compounded where the basis of the divorce is one of the parties' "coming out."

As an attorney who has represented gay and lesbian clients in their divorce proceedings involiving their striaght spouse, there are several issues to be recognized and addressed.

The first issue involves the decision to come out. Many clients ask if they should tell their spouse before the divorce. I usually advise them not to. If both parties have decided a divorce is what they want, coming out before the divorce would only complicate issues. In all divorce cases, grounds for the divorce must be alleged.

While adultery, mental and physical abuse, abandonment and others are recognized grounds for divorce in Georgia, I always recommend citing irreconcilable differences as the basis whenever it is possible. Citing irreconcilable differences avoids the need to produce evidence to support any of previously mentioned grounds. Thus a gay or lesbian client need not fear evidence of homosexual orientation being introduced.

Where grounds must be cited, issues of fault and the need to punish the offending party become factors. For the gay client, there is a real challenge present to avoid their being treated harshly. This is particularly true where the issue of alimony, child support or visitation are concerned and you have a gay client who has come out prior to finalizing the divorce.

Even when there are grounds for divorce other than irreconcilable differences, a client can still achieve success by addressing the second issue -- the divorce settlement or agreement.. When the parties reach agreement on as many issues as possible, they maintain control of the outcome.

In order to reach an agreement, there must be a willingness to communicate, negotiate and above all compromise, In most cases the two parties' main goal is to survive this time with some degree of dignity and sense of equity. I counsel my clients to avoid allowng emotions get in to tthe way of reaching a fair outcome. Issues of child custody, visitation, child support real property (your home, car, jewerly), and personal property as well as division of liabilities, (paying off the bills you made together), are always best decided between the parties and their counsel.

Leaving it up to a judge to decide almost always results in none being happy. A negotiated settlement avoids that possiblity. Once presented to the presiding judge, settlements are rountinely incorporated into the final order of divorce. In most instances the settlement is the core of the final order. Communication and a willingness to negotiated and compromise are the keys to success. Have a successful divorce.

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq., is an attorney in private practice in the Atlanta area.

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN METRO ATLANTA OVER:

54% OF ALL AIDS cases are BLACK; 67% of ALL BLACK MEN with AIDS are GAY or BISEXUAL. AIDS IS THE #1 CAUSE OF DEATH AMONG BLACK MEN AGES 25 - 44.

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EDUCATION

OUR COUSIN'S HOUSE, INC.

Our Cousin's House, Inc. is a non-profit organizationwiththe following mission statement:

"We will enhance the quality of life for people of color living with HIV/AIDS by providing comprehensive housing in a caring environment".

Our family consists of a board of directors,and a host of volunteers to accomplish this objective . We have secured a property, we are renovating it , and worked in a planning session that produced an organizational chart, an action plan, our immediate and long term finanical needs, and a"wish list" of equipment and items we need to operate.

We need your help! In addition to securing monetary donations, we will be contacting agencies, businesses, churches, and anyone else who can help us in this critical venture.

Not only will we provide housing for residents with HIV/AIDS,we will host support groups, assist in educating the community about the disease and its effects, as well as maintain a extensive service recourse library containing legal, medical, social, and practical information to enrich the lives of the residents and the community.

Let us share some history about the property we chose for Our Cousin's House,Inc. It is located in Atlanta, and is being purchased from a lady who will celebrate her 70th birthday this October. The house was in her family for several decades and has always been a place of refuge, where care and compassion were given to Stewardesses (during pre-fight attendant days), later to house unwed mothers, and most recently a house for elderly ladies.In keeping with this tradition, we are proud to be a part of this legacy.

Projections say that as of January,1994,340,000 in the United states have been diagnosed with AIDS. 1.5 million are infected with HIV. Other statistics state that by the year 2000, there will be 20,000 AIDS orphans who's parents have died and more than 4,000,000 women will have died from AIDS. Although frightening, until there is a cure we will probably all know someone who has been infected by this disease.

Anything you can do to contribute to Our Cousin's House,Inc. can be used to help make a positive impact in someone's life, by educating family members and the community as well as providing a home where people are treated with love, compassion and dignity. For more information on how you can help,please contact a board member or volunteer of OUR Cousin's House,Inc. at 1023 Dill Ave. Atlanta, GA 30310-9998 (404) 756-9202.

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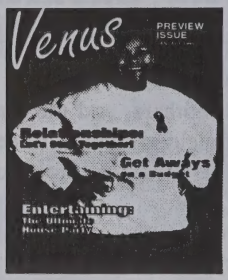

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WILL BUY NEW CAR WITHIN

1-3 mo 6 mo 12 mo. 2 yrs.

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WILL VACATION OUTSIDE YOUR CITY WITHIN THE NEXT

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SEXUAL ORIENTATION

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RELATIONSHIPS

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY OF ATTRACTION

Ulester V. Douglas

"According to recent data, heterosexual divorce rates appear to be increasing. More than 50 percent of first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce. Also, 67 percent of all recent marriages do not make it.

What about Black gay and lesbian relationships? What is our "divorce" rate? I am not aware of any "divorce" statistics on our relationships and I do not believe that any exist. One possible explanation for this void is that our committed relationships are not legally sanctioned. There is no consensus on an operational definition for what constitutes a "marriage" and thus a "divorce".

I would speculate that we have a higher rate of failed relationships than heterosexuals. This is due partly to homophobia, external and internal, and the absence of social institutions and rituals that support our relationships. I am not familiar with any models that address the nuances of Black gay and lesbian relationships. However, there are models that can assist us in understanding and improving our relationships.

In my experience, the most conveniencing and credible of these models is the Imago relationship therapy model. This model was pioneered by Dr. Harville Hendrix of The Institution for Relationship Therapy in New York. I will discuss the basic assumptions and implications of this model. Also, I encourage you to learn and utilize it in evaluating and understanding your relationships. It should be clear by now that we need much more than love to make our relationships work. The model's basic premise is that our unconscious agenda for wanting and having a committed relationship is to heal our childhood wounds. The assumption here is that regardless of how effective our caretakers were in their parenting, none were perfect thus, to some degree, we are all wounded.

Apparently, the unconscious attempts to re-experience the state of wholeness that we had when we were in our mother's womb. In order for this healing to take place, we have to find someone who is capable of healing those wounds. This person, whom the unconscious seeks, is a collage or compilation of the positive and negative qualities of our caretakers in other words our Imago.

Caretakers are anyone who was influential in our upbringing, especially during our early development. Because parents are usually our caretaker's, our Imago is likely someone who has a combination of those positive and negative traits. Yes, unconsciously what we are really looking for in a partner is someone who is, fundamentally, a combination of our caretakers' personality. Not very romantic is it?

This contradicts our conscious agenda which is more idealistic and tends to focus on physical and social characteristics. For example, when asked, what we are looking for in our partner, we might mention his or her height, age, education, butch/femme, top/bottom, etc., in other words, the kind of information that we would read in the personals. Sometimes the conscious and unconscious agendas co-exist and we may get the best and worst of both worlds. However, it appears that more often than not, there is a clash between both agendas and the unconscious usually prevails. Therefore we find ourselves in a relationship with someone who is the opposite of what we say we want. This person is likely to be very different from us; the relationship tends to be intense; conflicts are highly charged; and the sex "great". If the conscious were to "win," that is, we resist our unconscious agenda, we would likely end up with a person more like us, someone who would usually make a good friend. This is the kind of person we wished we were attracted to because he/she has so much 'going on,' including the qualities we desire in a partner. Regretfully, a relationship with this kind of person would be one of convenience, void of intensity, passion, and 'good' sex.

What are the implications of this model? How can we apply it to our present or future committed relationships? Some of the implications are: We must be patient in our search to find Mr./Ms. Right, because the unconscious is very selective. Regardless of how much we've worked on our issues, we need our Imago to help complete the process. We need the context of a committed relationship to complete our healing When we find our Imago, we will experience intense pleasure and intense pain. There will be times when we will wonder whether we made the right choice, because s/he will seem so incompatible. Unless the relationship is abusive, hang in there and work through these incompatabilities leaving is not the answer because you'll attract a similar partner and end up in the same situation. Seek professional help if necessary. "Love," as we usually define it, has nothing to do with it. Tina Turner was right. If love had something to do with it, most of us would be happily involved and the rate of failed relationships would not be as high as it is. I propose that we define love in terms of needs. So, when we say we love someone, we're talking about the degree to which that person is capable of meeting our emotional, physical, sexual, and spiritual needs. Thus, the person to whom we're most attracted are those who are most capable of meeting these needs usually our Imago. This is hard work! There are no short cuts to doing the work necessary to experience a long lasting, healthy relationship. Now, how can we apply this to our present or future relationship? A first suggestion is to learn more about this model and its applications. It is more involved than I have presented. To do this, I strongly recommmend reading two of Dr. Harville Hendrix's books. If you are in a committed relationship, I suggest you read, Getting the Love You Want, and if you're single I suggest, Keeping the Love You Find. Of course, you can read both, regardless of your relationship status. Another suggestion is to find a therapist skilled in using this model. Seeking therapy is advisable, especially if you're stuck in a power struggle with your partner. Seeking professional help does not mean we're less of a person or crazy; it's an

indication of our responsibility, of our maturity, and that we're taking care of ourselves. Many insurance plans would cover the cost of counseling. If unable to take advantage of professional counseling, I suggest the following: Determine your Imago. In order to do this correctly, you must be honest with yourself and accurate in the way you perceive your caretakers. Dr. Hendrix suggests that you make a list of the positive and negative traits of your parents and anyone else who strongly influenced you when you were young. Combine these traits. These traits should be how you saw your caretakers and influential others when you were a child, not how you see them now. Use simple adjectives or phrases like: Patient/ impatient, warm/cold, kind/unkind, rigid/ flexible, etc. This list represents your Imago. Make lists of the negative and positive attributes of partners to whom you were strongly attracted and with whom you had a committed relationship. Do this for your present relationship. Again, use simple adjectives and phrases. Compare and contrast these lists. Identify the patterns. How do they comare to your Imago? Conscious work must be done in order to your unmet childhood needs.

If you're in a committed relationship, you may want to share the information you've gathered in steps one through three with your committed partner. of the main objectives of a healthy relationship is thatwe perceive and experience our partner as a source of pleasure. I'm not suggesting that there will not be pain, but that there needs to be significantly more pleasure than pain. Actually, Dr. John Gottman, Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington, conducted empirical research which suggested that the ratio of pleasure to pain needs to be 5 to 1 if relationships are to succeed. Apparently, Dr. Gottman was able to predict, within a 94 percent accuracy which relationships would end in divorce.

Two variables were used to determine which relationships would end in divorce: conflict style and the extent to which couples maintained the ratio of pleasure to pain. I will comment more on this study in a future article. This discussion was not intended to be a substitution for professional counseling. The intent was to introduce a practical effective model which would explain the mystery of attraction and the steps we can take to strengthen our relationships and improve the odds that they will be healthy and long lasting.

Ulester Douglas is a licensed psychotherapist, practicing in the Atlanta area. You may write to him with your questions and comments in care of this magazine or you may fax at (404) 622-8089.

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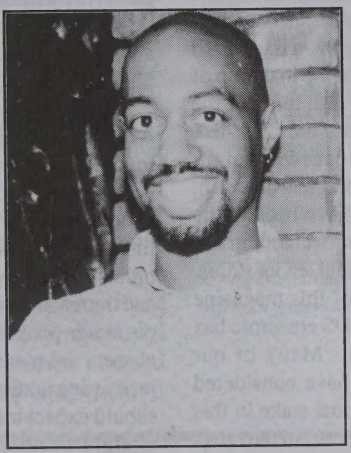
VOLUNTEERISM:

GIVING THE GIFT OF TIME

By Craig Washington



In a society where time is often equated with money, why do some people "give up" their time and energy without "gettin' paid." Are they really that generous? Or do they simply have time on their hands to parcel off to any deserving cause? Is volunteerism influenced by race, class, gender or sexual orientation? Do African-Americans volunteer any more or less than white Americans?

These questions and the myth and speculation they elicit come up often in my line of work. As a program coordinator for a large AIDS service organization, I work with volunteers on a daily basis. I also collaborate with other coordinators within my agency and throughout the community. I coordinate AID Atlanta's African-American Outreach program which targets much needed AIDS awareness and education to our people.

I've learned a great deal about volunteering over the past four years. When I learned of my HIV status, I was challenged by fear, guilt, and shame. Even though I was blessed with many potentially supportive friends, some of whom were AIDS activists, I disclosed to a select few. I eventually joined the Brooklyn AIDS Task Force as a volunteer. Working for the cause of my generation was more fulfilling than I'd expected. The experience enriched my life both as an individual and as a member of the affected community. I was contributing something to my brothers and sisters and that, to me, was "gettin' paid" in full. I was also magnifying my personal blessings, taking control of an adverse situation and turning it into something good. I had a full-time job and volunteered 10-15 hours a week and still wanted to do more.

When I moved to Atlanta in 1992, I started with AID Atlanta as an outreach volunteer.

The theme for 1994 World Aids Day was "family", which was appropriate for our Aid Atlanta program. Our experiences over the past two years have definitely bonded us in a family way. As Aretha once said, "thank you for my good sisters, thank you for my brothers." Two of our brothers Bernard and Ernest were called home this year but still walk with us in all the work we do.

VOLUNTEERISM

Most of the volunteers are women and gay men. I believe this is fairly representative of overall volunteer trends throughout our society, especially among African-Americans. In my experience, the vast majority of African-American volunteers have been women. This isn't surprising when you consider that much of African-American volunteerism is centered within the church. Look at the make-up of our churches — even though most of the mainstream black churches are male-led, the congregations are overwhelmigly female. Regarding sociopolitical activism, black female volunteers have been at the forefront of every social movement in our history, often without official leader status.

Most of the readers of this magazine already know how the AIDS epidemic has affected black gay men. Many of our brothers who might not have considered volunteering have a personal stake in this cause. This is clearly reflected in the ranks of AIDS workers (volunteered and paid) in Atlanta. Just as gay white men rallied to educate themselves and each other, our gay brothers and sisters must do the same and in doing so, address the collaborative ills of racism and homophobia within the communities to which we belong.

Although a number of black lesbians and gays (BL+Gs) serve as volunteers, the response isn't nearly commensurate with the needs and the numbers infected.

It is alarming to see so few new faces among the ranks of African-American lesbians and Gay men. It means that many of the veteran volunteers will burn out much more quickly. Those of us who are infected are often debilitated by serial illnesses; some of us die, so there is no such thing as too many volunteers.

Many BL+Gs shun any form of activism for fear of being outted either in terms of sexual orientation or HIV status. There are black lesbians who erroneously perceive themselves as not-at-risk and thus do not become involved or even educated about what's going on. AND THE BAND STILL PLAYS ON!!

I don't typically see a large number of African-American heterosexual men involved in any volunteer efforts. It might be that many brothers define their time as synonymous with money and both as limited. There are in fact, some altruistic brothers who serve as mentors, big brothers and outreach workers. Several of the street outreach programs targeting substance abusers are manned by straight-identified recovering addicts. However, we need and should expect more participation from our straight brothers, our elected officials, grass-roots leaders, our pastors and our bourgeois social/professional clubs. ALL NEED TO WAKE UP AND ANSWER THE CALL.

The African-American Outreach (AAO) volunteers have had difficulties in evolving a trusting relationship with the host agency. The Volunteers initially perceived their host agency as unresponsive to the needs of our community. Despite serving a predominantly black client caseload, the agency had not established the history of collaborators necessary to engage the trust of the people. The very concept of African-American outreach had not been duly prioritized despite the changing profile of AIDS. The AAO volunteers demanded support in the targeted literature and public relations

materials. Although we have garnered increased support, several volunteers feel the agency should expand community outreach beyond the activities of one program. Studies have indicated that African-Americans are far more likely to volunteer with predominantly black organizations. As with other groups, many African-Americans are more comfortable working among each other. In legally desegregated society such as ours, social segregation as well as institutionalized racism are still alive and well. In many instances, we find it more approprite to work within our social circles, churches, civic groups, and institutions.

In the past, African-Americans have launched massive volunteer-based programs for social concerns deemed deserving. From the abolitionist movement through Garveyism; from student sit-ins through the D.C. black pride march, we have donated our resources without pay to ensure our survival and progress. Regarding AIDS, we have allowed the confluence of social stigma, homophobia and prudishness to delay/diminish our response to this most ominous threat. We cannot afford to wait for formal leaders to legitimize our mobilization. We, all of us—grandmothers, high school students, buppies and drag queens must invite a roots movement (s) to stem the tide of infection and disintegration of our families, our neighborhoods, our futures, our lives.

Craig Washington is Volunteer Coordinator for African-American Outreach at AID Atlanta.

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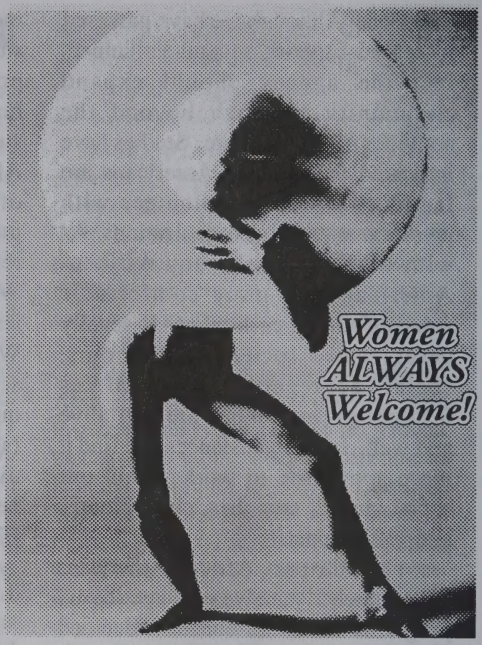

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NAME:
Niesha Dupree
AGE:
29
STATUS:
Single
HOMETOWN:
Greenville, M.S.

CURRENT TITLES:
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Ms. Gay Pride
Ms. Black World
Ms. Augusta Sweetheart
Ms. Southern Galaxy
Ms. Royal USA

FORMER TITLES
Ms. Gama
Ms. Lorettas
Ms. Black Alabama
MS. Red Rose
Ms. Vogue
Ms. Mid-City
Ms. Festival Newcomers
Ms. Newcomer Intern'l

When a live production includes Niesha Dupree, get ready for a Las Vegas style treat! This queen does 'Eartha Kit' better than Eartha! She is also the new president of the African Family Reunion of Gays & Lesbians, AFRO GALS. Catch her at the Waterworks Cafe, Atlanta on Sunday nites!

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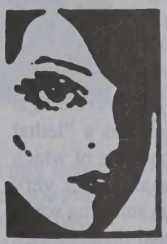

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What's Going On in Your Life?

What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals....

So tell us— What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

The problem is my best friend is HIV positive and participates in unsafe sex with partners who do not know his HIV status. This is not by accident.

Many times I don't hang with my buddy nowadays because of this situation. I don't want to consider myself as an "accessory to murder".

My question is, should I tell these unknowing partners of his HIV status thus "outing" my friend ? Help!

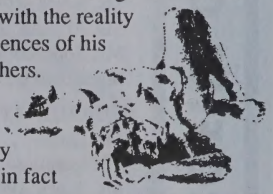
Sleepless in Atlanta

Dear Sleepless,

You are correct as you allude to the legal ramifications of your friend as a "lethal weapon", the legal consequences of which I am not qualified to speak. It is very apparent that your friend is suffering some psychological and emotional disturbances. He is ,obviously, very angry and in a great deal of pain with regard to the reality which confronts him. You are correct in refusing to participate in an environment of negative and dangerous behavior.
He does, however, need a "good friend" at this time.

Serving to warn his various sex partners is an anxiety provoking and insurmountable task you are attempting to bestow on yourself.

Is it your friend that you must first comfort, as best as you are able. It is important for you to attempt to intervene on his behavior, as a friend. First go to him and comfront him with the reality of the consequences of his behavior on others.



Secondly comfront him with the reality of who he has in fact become, a lethal weapon". Also encourage condoms at this time. Next, encourage him to seek counseling and if necessary, go with him to his first session as additional encouragement. He is very confused and lost at this time as anyone would be. Allow him a day, at the very most to process this.
If he is resisting and uncapable of this course of action, you must be a very strong and caring friend and advise him that should he not seek help, you will need to report his behavior to the appropriate organizational body. (The Center for Disease Control would be a likely starting point).

Sensing your personal and moral obligation to your friend, I know this is very difficult. However if all else fails, you have no alternative except to do what you know is emotionally, psychologically, physically, legally, and morally the appropriate imperative.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, PO. BOX 89238, ATLANTA, GA 30312 or Fax (404) 622-8089

H E A L T H

AIDS AND THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN LESBIAN

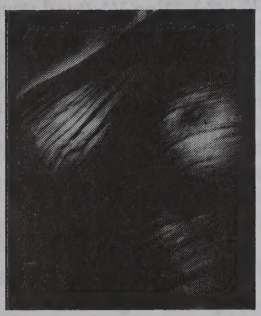
Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D.

Without question, everyone has heard something about AIDS. We have heard of this disease from so many angles that from time to time we are overwhelmed. We are made to reevaluate life, and encouraged to be non-judgmental. We are constantly challenged to become more educated and provoked to anger when examining high levels of prejudice and denial about the seriousness of this disease.

If you consider yourself "safe" from the threat of AIDS simply because you are a lesbian, then excuse yourself for being sadly mistaken!

Many lesbians have not solely maintained intimate partnerships with only one woman. Hence, any individuals regardless of sexual orientation having multiple partners, exposure to semen, vaginal secretions and blood can increase their risk of infection.

Do not allow your sexual orientation to dictate your level of seriousness regarding the prevention of HIV infection. There are multiple reasons to make HIV/AIDS prevention a part of your daily conscious experience. First, please recognized that no one will take better care of "you" than you. Secondly, if you



are involved in <u>any</u> sexual relationship,then you are at risk. Should you be one of millions of Americans who have experienced a sexually transmitted disease, then use that experience as an opportunity to make serious changes in your sexual behavior. Genital Warts, Gonorrhea, Herpes, Non-Specific Urethritis, Non-Specific Vaginitis, Syphilis, Trichomoniasis, etc. have all increased, (not decreased),in men <u>and</u> women within the past three years. These increased sexually transmitted diseases indicate the exchange of bodily fluids. Every living human being has within them bodily fluids that are capable of transmitting any pathogen or causative agent responsible for any of the above mentioned sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

African-Americans are steadily increasing in the national percentage of newly reported cases. Transmission rate studies have revealed that infection has increase tremendously among women 21-30 years of age.

Some studies indicate that transmission rates for Black women are 5 to10 times higher then that of their white counterparts. Specifically, African-American women are 13 times more at risk to become infected than white women. An examination of national data provided by the Centers for Disease Control reveals that four out of 5 women who are infected are of childbearing age. As you read this article, women are becoming infected with the AIDS virus!

The reality that lesbians must face is that many lesbians have had sexual encounters, (e.g., vaginal, anal, oral), with someone of the opposite sex!

50 ways to thrill your lover! Do it up on Valentines Day!

A boring date on any other day may be forgiven, but certainly not on Valentines Day. That's time to whip out your most romantic amunition.

If you could send one thousand perfect love doves to deliver one thousand perfect roses to your sweetie you won't have overdone it on this the warmest of days. So if you are high on emotions, but low on ideas on how to celebrate Valentines Day, take some advice from our list of 50 ways to say" I love you"! This year, let your imagination run wild as you plan the most romantic time ever for you and your lover.

1. Relax on a sunset cruise! Call your favorite travel agent and escape on a 3 day ship.
2. Have a catered dinner prepared at home.
3. Enjoy a n Al Jarreau CD and a candlelit bubble bath for 2.
4. Fill your honey's bed with rose peddles.
5. Wrap a hot red G-string in a very handsome box.
6. Have your valentines day card post marked in Valentine,VA.(mail your card in a large self addressed,stamped envelope with a note explaining that you would like your letter post marked. Send it to Postmasters of Valentine,VA 23887-9988.
7. Import his favorite vintage wine.
8. Sing your love a song you wrote this morning.
9. Bring home that cute puppy he's always wanted.
10. Treat her to a pampering all day spa.
11. Join her in a mud bath.
12. Plant love notes all over with clues on where to find the next one.
13. Plan a romantic champagne and cheese picnic in your living room.
14. Sky dive with a sign that says "I've Fallen for you!"
15. Prepare his favorite meal wearing only your red apron.
16. Serve yourself for desert!
17. Give your love a hand made coupon book filled with things you'd do for him all year through.
18 Stuff a handsome bag with sexy silk boxers,sprinkle chocolate kisses on top.
19. Show up for dinner wearing only your pumps and a blue fox!
20. Belly dance for her with a red heart on your naval.
21. Give your man a fruit bath ! melon,kiwi,strawberries,oooh!
22. Rent a cherry red sports car and drive to your special passion place.
23. Write a love poem documenting the evolution of your romance.

The AIDS virus is transmitted primarily through blood, (including menstrual blood), semen, urine, vaginal secretions, or feces.

Lesbians who may be at risk are those who:

1). share needles or any other IV drug paraphernalia (this is the single most important risk category for lesbians)

2). have had sexual contact with individuals who use IV drugs;

3). have sex with people who's sexual history are unknown;

4). used semen for insemination from a donor;

5). received blood a transfusion or blood products between 1979-1985; and

6). share sex toys which maybe contaminated with blood, semen or vaginal fluids.

It is important to consider where bodily fluids containing the AIDS virus can gain entry and make infection possible; vagina, anus, mouth and broken skin.

Should you or any one you know consider insemination to become pregnant,

it is suggested that you incorporate a sound screening technique that includes:

1). a risk assessment of your donor(s) on a case by case basis;

2). getting information about your donor's health, medical and sexual history;

3). asking your donor to take an HIV test at a site that will ensure his anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed;

4). having an antibody test done twice prior to insemination with a period of 3 to 6 months between tests; and

5). requesting any sperm bank or private physician to have sperm tested for HIV.

These are important considerations given many lesbians and gay men have use the insemination and co-parenting process to have a child. You must always examine your behavior and not measure your degree of risk based solely on sexual orientation.

If your orientation involves participation in behaviors that will increase your risk, then by all means begin making a conscious decision to initiate reinforced life enhancing changes. For example, sharing of sex toys should be discouraged. Instead, use two separate devices for each partner. Such changes must become on-going, never to be compromised for anyone.

This article was intended to provide information in a way that would encourage everyone to learn more about ways to reduce risk of infection, It was also intened to increase compassion for HIV positive African-American Lesbians and remind us all that the African American Gay and Lesbian community must continue to embrace its own.

Leonard Jack Jr., Ph. D. is a health and behavior scientist.

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25. Snuggle in a warm sleeping bag in front of a roaring fire.
26. Have flowers delivered 3 times a day!
27. Plan a mystery scavenger hunt that leads up to his favorite restaurant.
28. Reserve a horse drawn buggy and take a evening ride downtown.
29. Cram a pretty bag with all his favorite candy.
30. Dip her toes in melted Swiss chocolate, then indulge.
31. Enjoy a Barry White CD while you practice what you preach.
32. Score big points with your very own Drive-in movies. Set up a television and V.C.R. in your garage and surprise your love when you open the automatic door!
33. Reserve a Champagne helicopter ride along the coast.
34. Enjoy an evening train around the city or all the way to New Orleans and back!
35. Carve your names in a special Oak tree.
36. Dine at the Restaurant where you first met.
37. Arrange for the maitre'd to have your sweeties favorite flowers waiting on your secluded table.
38. Arrange an all day limousine to take her shopping.
39. Give up that credit card for a day!
40. Enjoy an Elegant French restaurant.The beautifully spoken words and delicate seasoning makes one feel extremely intimate.
41. Diamonds still work! Choose a brilliant stone and mount it in gold.
42. Give her a gift certificate to a Topless Maid Service. Spring cleaning will never be the same!
43. Give him a gift certificate to a G-string maid service.
44. Pretend that this is your first date.
45. Take off to New England for a sensational ski weekend.
46. Get down on one knee and pop the question.!
47. Read poetry each other.
48. Give a kitten with a pretty bow.
49. Make a suprise deposit in your mate's account.
50. Give a simply 'I love you!'

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Mr. Melvin

affirmation. The visit was easier. Mother Porter asked them if they wanted to come to revival to hear the Reverend C.W. Gillespie preach. They declined not because they didn't want to, but because they had tickets to the show at the university theatre that weekend.

Missionary left after thumbing through their many photographs and giving Mary plenty medicine advice like: putting an onion in your sock when you have a fever, laying on the Bible to stop a headache and that two teaspoons of white vinegar for each quart of water would beat any woman's disease.

Still the air was full. They shared another heavy night. Lou neither Mary went to work the next morning. They thought maybe Missionary Porter was bringing spirits in or working roots on them; the strangeness of this new relationship was a strain.

Three days later the old woman returned. This time with a sweet potato pie still warm from the oven. When she handed it over, Mary felt like she was receiving a just born baby in a bunting. They cut into it quickly. Lou savored her portion like a woman's breast. Mary was careful not to drop a crumb and even Missionary, who baked these weekly, had to confess she had put a hurting on that pie. After eating, they sighed and sat still. Missionary could be heard rolling an icecube around in her mouth and crushing it between her dentures.

Someone had to speak, she did.

"Baby girls, you all know I'm a sanctified woman."

They affirmed with a nod.

"And you know I'm water baptized, holy-ghost filled and running for my life."

They believed it was true.Something I got to say, been wanting to say it since I been in your place. I wouldn't tell you nothing wrong. I asked God to give me the words to say."

Lou got sour right off cause she knew what was coming. Why did this old woman have to destroy this evening with a sermon, a testimony, a reprimand. She had heard them all. Lou wanted to make the woman quiet up, fill her with more pie, but Mary moved a little closer to her companion and one slight touch stilled the waters.

The confession began:

When I was your age, Mary, I knew a woman name Margaret. She had hair white as a cotton flower and light black skin. And if you'll pardon me, Miss Lou, there wasn't nothing woman about her 'cept the hint of red lipstick she always wore. I don't know why I was drawn to her, but I truly was. She learned me so many things about God and about myself. I don't think I knew anything about myself till I met Margaret. Don't get me wrong; I knew God, but me, I didn't know about me. She learn me that I got every element inside me. I got a shower and I got fire. I got a wind and I got an earth. I believe God sent her to me. She was an evangelist, who made up her mind from the time she was 11 years old that she was gonna live without men and from the moment I met her,I did too. I used to make her sweet 'tayta pie and she read me the Bible. I ain't never heard nothing like it. Seem like those folks in the Bible just got up and walked when she read to me. We'd sit and she'd vision this great ministry she would have. It come to true, I know, cause I travelled with her for 15 years. The last stop was here in Cotsville where after a Sunday evening service, she died in my arms.

The silence in the room go so deep and wide. Mary craved to hold Lou's hand, as Missionary began rocking back and forth, tears brimming but never falling from her eyes. Lou left for the bathroom. When she returned Missionary was finishing her lemonade. The old woman kissed both of their hands and turned to leave. As she remembered, she paused.

"What I told ya'll is nothing to tell others. That's a present for the two of you. "Don't tell things of understanding to a fool." That's what Margaret used to

Cont. From Page 33

say. People in Cotsville think with a carnal mind, not a spirit one, remember that. Half the people sending folks to hell is going themselves; hell's gonna be so full, you're gonna need a reservation to get in. I love you girls so much, not just because you Jesus children, but because you done learn how to suffer for what you want. Gods sees and know."

When the door latched behind her, Mary and Lou wrapped themselves together and mixed their tears.

Mother Porter came back often, but this was the visit they never talked about again.▾

Noted playwrite, Dr. Shirlene Holmes, is Assistant Professor of Communications at Georgia State University. Mary and Lou is taken from her collection of 'Cotsville Stories'.

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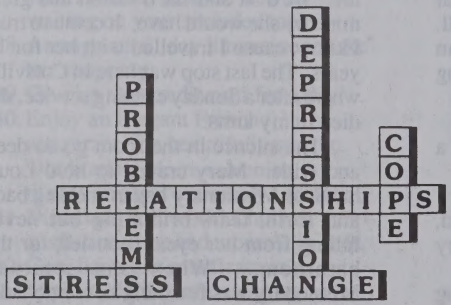

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COMMUNITY CALENDER

FEBRUARY

• 5 •

LOS ANGELES

When Zora met Langston...Productions (WZML...P) presents a dynamic new play called Black Coffee. The show, directed by Antonio D. Le Mons and written and performed by Blaine Teamer, opens at the Hollywood Moguls Thatre, 1650 N. Schrader Blvd., (formerly N. Hudson) at 1:00 p.m., and runs Sunday, February 12, 19 and 26. For Tickets call Theatix at (213) 466-1762

• 11 •

ATLANTA

Think It's Not When It Iz, Inc., a female theatre troupe from NYC, presents "Sensuality". This pre-Valentines' Day sensation is sponsored by Sisters of 30 Something Special in association with Just Us theatre Inc. at the West End Cultural Arts Center, 8 p.m. with a cast Party Immediately following. For tickets call (404) 752-7100.

• 12 •

ATLANTA

Sweet heart Dance Party. Dance to your favorite slow jams.
Club Oxygen, 3065 Peachtree Rd., Buckhead. 4-10 p.m. For more info: (404) 997-6240

• 14 •

Happy Valentine's Day

• 15 •

ATLANTA

Aid Atlanta HIV prevention Open Forum 7-9 pm,
1438 West Peachtree St. (404) 872-0600

• 16 •

LOS ANGELES

The Black Gay & lesbian Leadership Forum presents, The 1995 Summit at the Los Angeles Airport Hilton and Towers. The theme is, "Black Lesbians and Gays: Our Families, Our Communities, Our Lives", February 17-19, 1995. For more info call (213) 964-7820

24 •

NEW YORK

Silk, Satin, Leather & Lace... Productions presents Ski Weekend '95. Feb. 24-26, Eden Resort. Ski, Party, and Shop til you drop! call Rachelle (718) 842-2929.

• 25 •

ATLANTA

Nuts & Bolts, A Workshop for Women about getting published. Fee $35.00
Led by Nancy Bereano, 1-5 p.m. at the First Existentialist Congregation
470 Candler Park Drive. For info call (404) 524-0304

The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

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WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
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The Gay & Lesbian Center
208 W. 13th St. NY. NY 10011

African America Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA)
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Black Lesbian/Gay Rights and Organization.

AIDS Education Services for Minorities (AESM)
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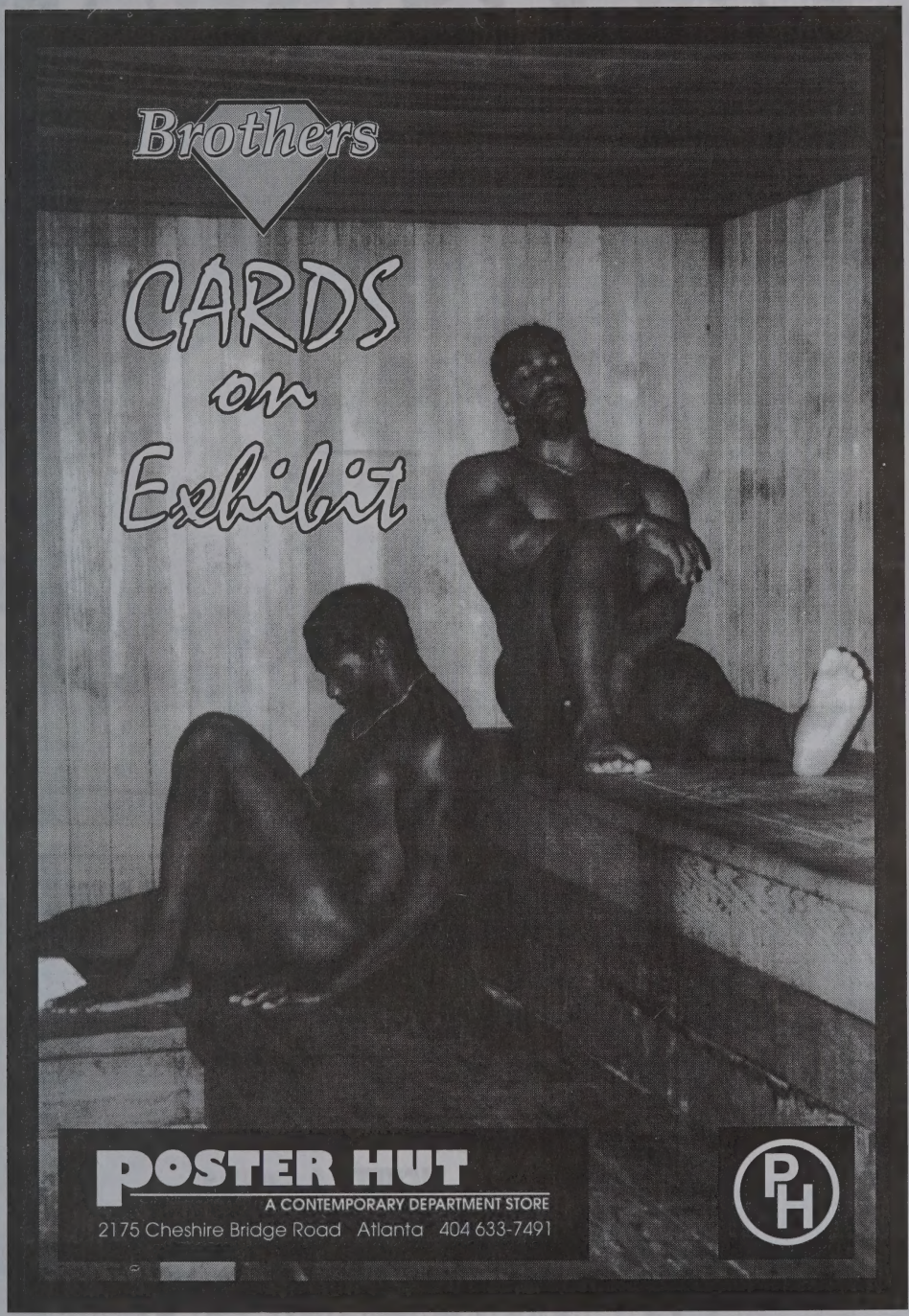
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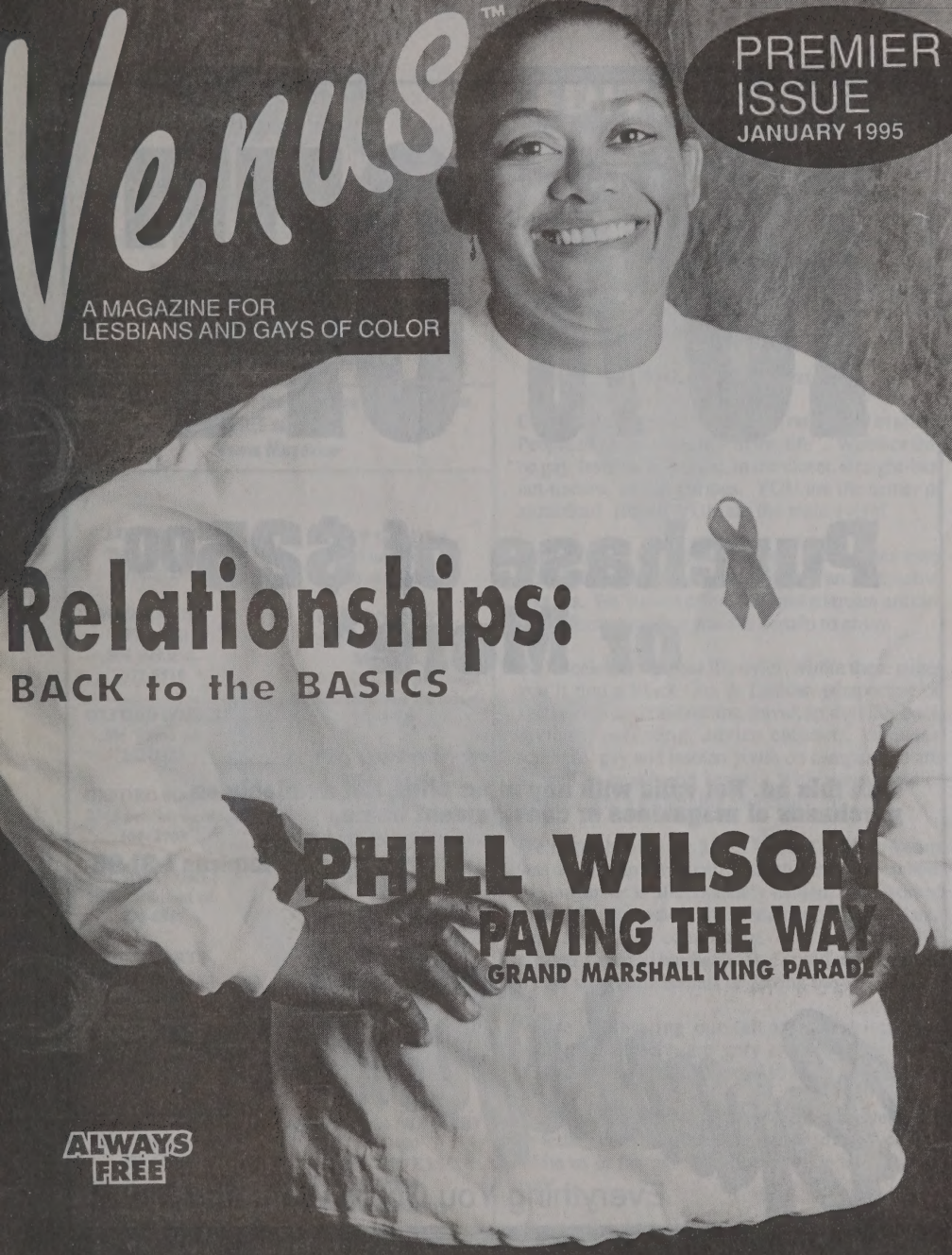

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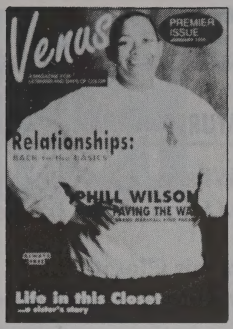

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EDITORS NOTES

Imagine a magazine reflecting the everyday lives of African American lesbians and gay men! It's definitely an idea who's time has come. Actually, it's long over due. I mean really, after a long day at work, I'd like to come home, put my feet up and occasionally flip through a periodical that speaks directly to ME, a black lesbian living and working in contemporary America.

Welcome to Venus!

Every exciting issue of **Venus** has only YOU in mind! People of color who are " in the life". Whether that be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, in the closet, straight-but-not-narrow, or just curious. YOU are the center of attraction! Honey, YOU are the main event!

Venus, gives us a place to be! We'll offer easy reading articles that promote self love, and alternative choices. We'll even offer some main stream articles and information that you are certain to enjoy.

We're celebrating your lifestyle! Within these pages you'll find a Black Gay & Lesbian perspective on such topics as relationships, travel, spirituality, book reviews, parenting, advice columns, business, romance, gay and lesbian youth on campus, the arts as well as health and beauty. With every issue of Venus, there's something especially for YOU!

We're celebrating the life of **Venus Landin! Venus** was an African American Lesbian Activist for whom the magazine is affectionately named. She worked to raise consciousness and participation in the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian community. Her death in 1992 created a void in our hearts that could only be filled by the sights and sounds of getting busy!

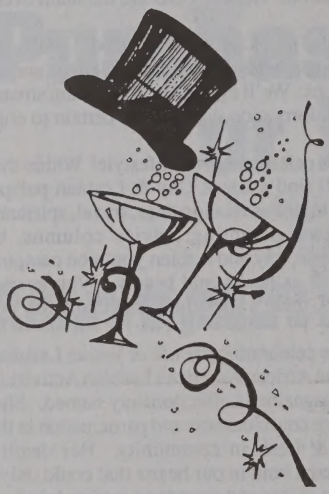
We're celebrating our talents, as writers and professionals who are very excited to deliver a magazine that you'll be proud to share with friends!

We invite you to further participate in this celebration by letting us know what you think, and how you feel. Write us or fax us! We are expecting to hear from you!

So, go ahead! Kick back, relax and curl up with one of the best things that ever happened to YOU...

Venus™ MAGAZINE

HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Life In This Closet

I am an African-American woman.
I am thirty something.
I am a professional manager type.
I own a home.
I have a dog.
I have two children.
I have a husband and have been married almost two decades.
I am a lesbian.
No, you didn't read wrong. I am a lesbian,
always have been,
always will be.

I grew up in a small southern town with my entire family to take care of me and my brothers. My mother, my aunts, my grandma all very domineering women. I was always taught to go to school, study hard, work hard, be a lady, and I would get a good husband. In the eyes of my family the purpose for being a woman was to do these things and of course have children. I loved these women. I trusted them, and believed them. I felt horrible growing up knowing secretly I didn't measure up, but I was obedient and tried to do as I was told I performed daily for my family, did drugs most of the time and kept my secrets.

I went to camp the summer of my fifteenth birthday and fell in love with a girl attending camp also. We became close and soon after, intimate. My happiness, my new found self, was more than I had ever imagined. I loved her. I wanted to see her after camp ended. We talked on the phone. We wrote to each other and made plans to see each other. She lived in another town. A family member of hers arranged a sleep over for us. I could hardly wait to get there. When I arrived all hell broke loose! Her mother had read my letters to her and decided I was a bad influence and not the kind of person her daughter needed as a friend; she wanted her daughter to have "normal friends". In a matter of minutes my life had been destroyed. I tried calling her. She was afraid her parents would kill her if she had anymore contact with me. I never wanted harm to come to her. I started doing drugs again and sleeping with any man that could produce an erection.

I met a nice guy, got married, had kids and made a commitment to "live normally". My parents are happy. My family sees me as a success. My children are growing up well, and my husband is a good man.....I am a lesbian in the closet behind the clothes. I've had three affairs , all of the women in the same situation as my own.

There are a lot a us living this lie for different reasons. Some women say they are bisexual because they have sex with men. When I ask if they are sexually attracted to men, they say no. For me **bisexual** is a sexual attraction for both sexes. I don't have that. I am a lesbian.

Women who know the truth about me and are out, treat me as an outcast. Women who are straight and don't really know, make dyke jokes.

I live or maybe survive it all. I love women. I am not confused about my sexual orientation, I made a choice to make others happy instead of myself. One day the courage I lack may come. I don't know. Writing this has been liberating in a strange sort of way; even if it's only temporary. When I put my pen down I go back to my life. I am not alone, but lonely.

It's not easy being a lesbian in this closet I've created.▾

VOLUNTEER KICK OFF!

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SPIRITUALITY

Release the Shackles

by Kamau Ifoma

About a year ago, while being interviewed by Oprah, Maya Angelou expressed a life changing event which had happened to her some forty years ago. While studying "Lessons In Truth", the group facilitator had Maya repeat an affirmation which she had never considered before. It simply stated "God Loves Me"! Initially, she reported, this was very difficult for her to imagine or repeat. Being a "Negro: woman, in the 1950's, a survivor of many perpetrations, she had never fathomed the possibility that God could and did actually Love Maya. Well, she went on to discuss how this simple message, God Loves Me, changed her life.

Rev. Kamau Ifoma Founder
Home Free Ministry

"For so long we have been pushed outside of the traditional Spiritual belief systems because of our choice of Love."

We have been conditioned, convinced and faced to believe that God has no place for us in His/Her/Its universe. Many gays and lesbians sit in congregations, each and every Sunday morning to hear the messages of condemnation of all the sinners. Messages that teach of loving the sinner but not the sin. They offer their contributions (tithes, etc.) for this bashing and then return to the world believing that they are sinners with no hope of salvation. They set up patterns of self destruction because of this conditioned belief. They learn to hate themselves, they teach others that it's OK to hate them, also. They hide behind the many mask of perpetration, attempting to convince the world that maybe the mask itself will place them back in the graces of God. And under the masks they continue to destruct.

As African American Homosexuals (Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transpersons, Same-sex attracted or however you may identify yourself) it is time for us to release the shackles that have bound us outside the grace of the Universal Creator. It is time for us to claim for ourselves that "Yes, God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me! You should ring this statement out with the fullness of all the energy and emotion that you can exert. It is the truth. Not just for a "chosen people" but for all of creation. Whatever your chosen means of expressing, celebrating and worshipping your Divine self maybe, it is important that you allow yourself to celebrate your whole, total self. Your gender, race, height, weight, shoe size, career, talents, etc. This means all of you. Including your sexuality. Sexuality is just as much a gift, a God created gift, as the rest of you.

See Page 8

PROFILE OF A MAN

NAME:
Kamau Ifoma

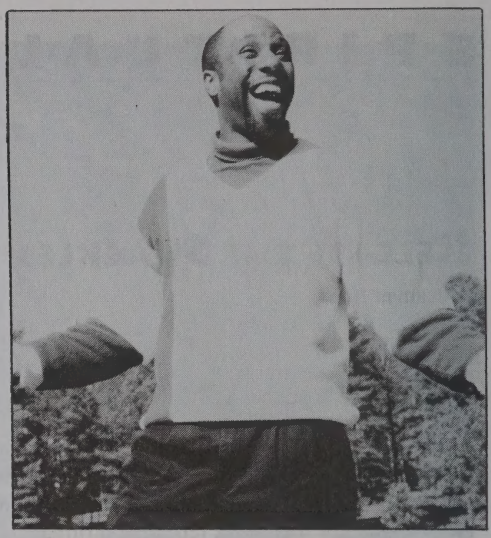
AGE:
"ageless"

STATUS:
happy, free, available!

HOMETOWN:
Gary, Indiana

CAREER:
Minister

LAST BOOK READ:
Celestine Prophecy



Founder of Home Free Ministry, Rev. Kamau enjoys watching the spirit of people unfold as they step out on faith. He also says his favorite way to work out is dancing!

SPIRITUALITY

Continued from pg. 27

It is our desire to utilize this section on Spirituality to discuss and demonstrate the presence of the Universal Creator, Spirit, Allah, Jehovah, Brahma, the Orisha's, God in all life. We plan to inform you of the many traditions and beliefs systems which embraces all sexual expressions. We shall offer direction to those who are looking for spiritual acceptance. We shall feature ministries, churches, groups, religions, cultures and traditions, etc. which have unconditional open door policies for all people. We shall discuss the myths which have been taught to us and present the truths as we know them to be. Above all, this shall be a platform of exposing and demonstrating Love. We have no desire to fall into the trap of using the methods of others to push a belief system. Condemnation and fear will not reveal itself through this section. Love, Love and only Unconditional Love shall abound. Whatever it may take for us to come to the understanding as a community, that "God Loves Me!", this is our goal.

If you belong to an organization which teaches unconditional love and you would be presented here in this section of Venus Magazine we would like to hear from you. Please contact Kamau Ifoma at the magazine for further information.

Home Free Ministry
A Place of Spiritual Unfoldment

REV. KAMAU IFOMA
Founding Minister

P.O. Box 668
Atlanta, GA 30301
(404) 818-2033

...Where God Expresses Itself As You!

EDUCATION

AIDS EDUCATION/ SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM),

As its name implies, AESM has been providing Aids education and services to individuals with HIV/AIDS since 1990. The founders, Rudy Carn, Mae Reed, and the late Madam Edna Brown began reaching out to the African-American gay and lesbian community in effort to fill the void. There were no community-based AIDS service organizations providing education on AIDS prevention in a culturally appropriate framework for our community.

If you have frequented any of the local bars, the Pearl Garden, Lorretta's, Traxx, or the Otherside, you probably have met an outreach worker of AESM passing out condoms and literature about testing sites, safer sex practices, etc. Outreach workers are availabe to answer any questions about these topics.

A major accomplishment of AIDS Education / Services for Minorities is the AESM House. AESM House is a six person transitional home for African-American Gay men who have HIV. The residents of AESM House are provided a safe and supportive living environment,along with social services needed to help make a transition into the community and regain control of their lives. Many of these individuals have been rejected by family, friends or lovers. Others have lost incomes due to illnesses or discrimination. However they arrive at AESM House, all are given the help they need to regain control.

Our community is disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Rudy Carn, the driving force behind AESM has been a tireless advocate in the battle to insure that the African-American Gay and Lesbian community obtain needed funds for programs which provide education on the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and also provide services to our brothers and sisters who are already infected.

Given the present political climate, more advocates are needed to protect the gains which have been made and to fight for an even bigger slice of the funding "pie".

AESM welcomes you, your talents, your activism, and your dollars. For more information about AESM or this programs, call (404) 753-2900.

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PROFILE OF A WOMAN

NAME:
Beverly Hall

AGE:
25

STATUS:
Single

HOMETOWN:
Atlanta

CAREER:
Student

LAST BOOK READ:
Queen of the Damned
by Anne Rice

Beverly, a senior at Georgia Tech, studies International Affairs when she's not improving her serve. She loves to read, talk politics, and think!!

CLASSIFIED

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RELATIONSHIPS

BACK TO THE BASICS!

U. Vincent D.

"Where did you spend the holidays?" This question can have serious implications. At minimum it forces us, however briefly, to make an assessment of all of our relationships. Let's go there. Where DID you spend the holidays? Did you spend it with your family of origin (Parents, grand parents, and other blood relatives)? Deciding when to spend time with your family of origin may not be a difficult and stressful decision depending on your cognitive and emotional responses to these questions: Will both parents be there? How well do you get along with your parents and other relatives? Will someone ask you when are you going to get married? Do your parents know that you are in the life? If they know, are they comfortable with it? Do you have a partner? Would your parents invite him/her to their home?

It is a safe bet that most of us had negative responses to these questions. It is more likely that our relationship with our parents and other relatives is emotionally strained. It is more likely that they will act as if they did not pick up on your "I am in the life, I am not going to get married" cues. If they acknowledge that we are in the life, it is unlikely that they would invite our partners to the family gatherings.

In spite of these concerns, some of us decide to spend time , (holidays, birthdays, etc.), with our parents-assuming we have a choice. We reason that we only have to put up with their stuff for a couple of days or we buy into their guilt trip, but the essence of it is that family needs to be together, (especially during the holidays), and there is something wrong with us for not wanting to come home-even if coming home, means being abused. Many of us do not take the guilt trip, or put up with their stuff even for a couple of days. We decide, instead, to spend our time with our family-of-choice (girlfriend, boyfriends, friends, etc.)

Our family-of-choice is critical to our emotional survival, especially if we are unable to turn to our family-of-origin for emotional support.

How are you doing with your family-of-choice? My guess is that you have experienced at least one loss due to AIDS, violence or irreconcileable differences. Because the holidays have illuminated loses, we need to take special care of ourselves to help cope with these loses.

Although each one of us has different definitions of taking care of ourselves, I recommend the following; chose to always be in supportive environments, places where you do not have to wear a mask; places where you will not be shamed having and expressing feeling, places where there are safety and trust. If this means being alone, then so let it be. Although, my hope is that no one would have to be alone because there isn't a safe place to go.

Of the family-of-choice issues we face, our romantic relationships appear to be the most challenging. Getting together and staying together may seem like a nightmare. Some of us have become disillusioned and have resigned to being single. Instead of investing in finding a partner, we invest in our careers, vocations, children, pets, etc. What makes finding and keeping partners who have got it together such an odyssey? Is it not your experience that ninety percent of the brothers you meet, (perhaps just as high for sisters), are single and looking for basically the same thing? We say that it's not all about looks; we want someone who has other things going on. We say we are tired of going to the bars; we want someone who likes staying at home, quiet times and jazz. We say it is not all about sex; we must have commitment. What's going on? Something is seriously wrong

with this picture. If so many of us are looking for basically the same thing, then why are so many of us single, and hating it? What is preventing us from getting together and staying together?

Now, if you are one of the fortunate few who have found a partner who is all that, you might be wishing that he/she came with a warranty that reads, "partner for life, minor problems, guaranteed to work or will replace him/her with a partner of greater or equal value." Sorry, actually if there was a warranty, it would read, "This will be one of the most pleasurable yet painful experience since your childhood or your last break up. Handle with self-knowledge, love, patience and commitment or you will be single again".

I do not mean to suggest that being single is necessarily a terrible experience. Actually, being single allows us an opportunity to work on improving the chances that our next relationship will be healthy and long lasting.

This work includes conscious preparation. It is not enough to hope to find "the right person". The first step you must take it's to put a hold on having a serious relationship until you have finished your conscious preparation. It is okay to date, but resist trying to find "Mr. Right" or "Ms. Right". Neither exists, and I guarantee you are more likely to find "Mr. Wrong" or "Ms. Wrong". Putting a hold on serious relationships is especially critical if you ended a meaningful relationship during the last year. That is because you will likely need that much time to wash that man or woman out of your hair. If you don't, you will contaminate your next relationship with those unresolved issues. The relationship will eventually become sick and die.

The second step is to work on your own issues. This means learning as much as you can about what makes you tick. This process includes understanding how your childhood experience contribute to how you perceive and relate to others. Also, how much or little you adapted to the relationship model that your caretakers presented. It is about making unconscious issues conscious; it is about listening to the tapes in you head and editing them so that you can rid yourself of negative messages, i.e. homophobic and racist experiences. In some cases professional counseling may be necessary to assist in this process, especially if traumatic experiences such as emotional, physical and sexual abuse were recorded on these tapes.

The third step is to learn as much as possible about relationships. Most of what we know about relationships came from our caretakers, usually parents. And I would suggests that what many of us learned, is not what we would like to replicate in our relationships. Not only was much of it unhealthy, but some of the dynamics do not apply to same-sex relationships. I caution, that if you do not adhere to the kind of preparation that is being proposed in this article, you will likely replicate any unhealthy dynamics in your caretakers relationships.

We can learn about relationships by reading books and articles, going to seminars and workshops, watching programs on television, going to counseling, etc. Whatever your choice, you must inform yourself about the complexities of romantic partnerships. It is the lack of understanding of these dynamics that contribute to high rate of failed relationships. As black men and woman in the life, we have additional challenges that threaten our attempts to come together and stay together. We must counter these threats with knowledge. Our survival is dependent on our ability to come together through love and respect for each other. I will give some suggestions on how to do this in our next issue.▾

U. Vincent D, is a licensed psychotherapist.
You may write to him with your questions and comments in care of ***Venus Magazine*** *at P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312 or you may send him a fax by dialing (404) 622-8089.*

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PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVER : WRITE A WILL

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq.

Eric could only sit back and watch as his meager belongings were loaded onto the van. He and Donald had been together for three years. Theirs was a special relationship that only existed in the romance novels or story books. Until that fateful day three months ago, they thought they would be together forever. Then, that drunken driver changed all that. Donald did not wake up to feel the pain he would have felt. The day after the memorial service, Donald's brother asked Eric when he would be leaving the home they had shared. Eric was stunned, he had helped pay the mortgage, help plant the garden and build the deck, things that he knew Donald would have wanted him to have he was now told he had no right to. Now he was being asked to leave as though he had been some guest. The attorney was nice, but as he said, there was nothing he could do. Donald had left no will. Their relationship was not legally recognized so in the eyes of the law, Eric had no rights. Now as he sat watching he could only wish...

If you think that only happens in books and movies, think again. It could happen to you. The reality is that we are not protected by the laws of interstate succession in Georgia. Should you or your lover die or face death, there are no provisions in law governing your status to that person. You would be considered a friend at best an intruder at worse. There are things you can do to remedy this.

It should be looked at as a means of assuming control over your life and your belongings however meager they may seem.

Most lawyers recommend that you have three documents A Will, Living Will, and Power of Attorney.

A Will outlines your wishes should you die. It specifies a person to carry out your wishes. This person is called the executor or Administrator of your estate created by your Will. The Executor can have as broad a set of authority as you wish. He or she is required to carry out your wishes as specified in the Will unless legally unable to do so. There are no requirements as to who you can name as Executor. As a general rule, this person should be someone you feel confident will carry out your wishes and is strong enough to fight those who would do otherwise. He or she should be someone you feel confident will carry out your wishes and can be a friend, relative, caretaker, the choice is yours. Within the Will, you can include plans for your funeral or burial in as much detail as you wish. In fact, some people have planned the entire service including the program. Most are not that detailed. In general, the Will outlines your desired distribution of personal and real property, house, care, jewelry, etc. you own at the time of death. Distribution can be to and individual or individuals. It can be to a charitable organization or business. There is no requirement that you have a sizable amount of property. Small items such as jewelry, clothing, electronic equipment, even plants can be made a part of your will and distributed as you desire. It should be noted that your Will can be changed or revoked at anytime and replaced with a new Will.

A Living Will outlines your wishes in the event you have a terminal condition as outlined by Georgia statute. It governs the administration of life sustaining devices and the giving of food and water. You choose what circumstance you wish the Living Will provisions to take effect and then you choose the type of care you wish to receive. It does not preclude administration of pain medication, or efforts to make you comfortable during this time. It merely addresses issues dealing with sustaining life. As with a Will, a Living Will can be changed or revoked at anytime. A power of Attorney is authority you grant to someone to act on your behalf when you are unable to do so. It grants this person the authority to do those acts you specify in the document granting the power of attorney. Those powers can be as broad as you wish. From granting authority to do all those things you can legally do were you able, to granting power over your medical care and or financial affairs. Take control over your life. That is the only way we as African American Gays & Lesbians can be sure the ones we love and care for are protected. Remember, the law does not protect us. Don't let Eric's story become yours.▾

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq. is an African American out gay attorney in private practice in Atlanta.

PHILL WILSON:
PAVING THE WAY!

Douglas E. Jones

From his vantage point in the Black community, the Black gay community, the Black gay community living with AIDS, Phill Wilson offers reflections on a multitude of issues. Wilson is eloquent, his diplomacy accommodating without being evasive. This January, under the directorship of Phill Wilson as Grand Marshall, the King parade will commence its annual celebration. It is not significant that Mr. Wilson is gay. There have been other openly gay Grand Marshalls of the King parade: Barney Frank, the Congressman, Peri Jude Radecic, and Ivy Young, both of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, to name three. But, is it significant that the King Center choose Mr. Wilson as Grand Marshall because of the fact that he is an openly gay, African-American man? Venus Magazine asked that question and many others in our conversation with Wilson, the Policy Director of AIDS Project Los Angeles and the founder of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum (BGLLF).

Venus Magazine: Given the image of the King Center as a conservative African-American institution, is it historically significant that you, an African-American gay man living with AIDS, are going to be the Grand Marshall for this year's parade?

Phill Wilson: Well, I really don't know if it's significant, that's a question you would have to ask them [the King Center]. Certainly, I'm not the first gay person to be a grand marshall I know of at least two or three openly gay or lesbian people who have been Grand Marshall of the parade. I believe this will be the first time that they've had a Black gay man as the Grand Marshall, and probably the first time that they've had a person with AIDS. I'm not in Atlanta, so I can't speak to the King Center's reputation there, but certainly my impression of the King Center would not be to characterize them as being a conservative Black institution. As a matter of fact, the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, which is the national Black gay and lesbian organization that I founded, has had a very strong relationship with the King Center since its inception. We held a summit on homophobia in the Black community as early as 1988 which was hosted by the King Center and convened by Martin Luther King III.

VM: Considering the King Center's position in terms of leadership on the issue, how does that reflect back to the overriding sentiment of homophobia within the Black community?

PW: Although, to my knowledge, Dr. King didn't explicitly address the issues surrounding gay and lesbian people in any of his writings, certainly he addressed the issues implicitly in his writings and his speeches. Mrs. King, on a number of occasions most recently at the National Skills Building Conference held in Atlanta during November has explicitly spoken about the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the civil rights struggle. She also stated that she believes, were her husband alive today, that he would have included gays and lesbians in any civil rights works that he was a part of. Mrs. King also spoke out strongly during the military activity, stating that gays and lesbians should not be arbitrarily dismissed simply on the basis of sexual orientation.

VM: So, within the Black community, are we finally moving to grappling with the issues of sexuality and homophobia?

PW: Absolutely. I think that the issue around sexual minority and sexual diversity is one with which the Black community is struggling. Certainly we have our own version of the religious, radical right, if you will. But, I think that the issue for Black folks is rooted more in fundamental strategies around survival and although I don't agree that we have to

make some of the choices that others seem to believe we have to make, I do believe that what motivates Black people, Black leaders in particular, to make some of the choices that can be perceived as homophobic, are really not about homosexuality or positions about gay and lesbian people, but more rooted in fears and issues about survival.

VM: Meaning that we are coming to a prioritization about embracing the struggle as Black folks versus Black gay folks.

PW: Right. Nevertheless, as Black gay men and lesbians, I think we have an obligation to challenge those issues and positions. From my point of view, to the extent that homophobia exists in the Black community, and clearly it does, it partially exists because not enough of us have been willing to be openly gay and lesbian in the context of our communities and the work of our communities.

VM: You have often talked about the need for us to create that space in which to come home; the space in which to be able to simultaneously interact with society on the cultural level and with our families on issues of sexuality.

PW: Exactly. The truth of the matter is our communities need us. They need us now more than ever and they need our talent and our skills. And the only way for us to deal with that particularly considering the rising Black nationalist movement which sometimes perceives us as a threat is, quite frankly, to make sure that we hold on to our legacy and our birthright. No one has a right to take our Blackness away from us. It is not an acceptable paradigm to say that one needs to choose between one's sexual orientation and one's race. It is an untenable paradigm to put one in. We need to reject that and say, 'No we are not going to make that choice and we are not going to give up our communities, our families, our churches, and our homes.

VM: How do we straddle that fence? How do we claim ourselves?

PW: First of all I don't think that there's a fence that needs to be straddled. I think it's a matter of claiming all of who we are. Do you ever ask a Black woman, Well are you a woman or are you Black?' It is not a question that you ask. Do you ever ask a child, 'Well are you a child or are you Black?' Or if you're left-handed or tall, 'Are you lefthanded or Black?' etc. You don't ask those questions. Now, granted, in some of those situations there are not enough socio-political implications connected to those identities, so the parallel is not complete. But, nevertheless, at the end of the day any contribution that I or we can make to a community that desperately needs our contribution is enhanced when we (a) claim all of who we are and (b) don't have to invest time and energy in hiding who we are. So, the Black community, in the final analysis, benefits by Black gays and lesbians being able to be who they are within our community. I hope that that is, in fact, a significant part of the message in my being selected the Grand Marshall in this year's celebration because that certainly has been the way I have lived my life. I have attempted to integrate the all of my life into the all of who I am and what I do whether or not the specific venue I am working in is a "Black" venue or a "gay" venue or its an "AIDS" venue, I bring my vision of the world, which is the vision of a Black gay man living with AIDS, to those venues.

VM: People of color, be they Black or Latino, constitute a disproportionate number of those whom are affected by HIV and AIDS, but, on the reverse side, we represent such a small percentage of those who are in volunteer and educational capacities. Are we ignoring ourselves?

PW: I think that there is still a tremendous amount of denial within the Black community about AIDS. But, in addition to that, to be completely honest, being able to volunteer in any capacity is a luxury. It means that you have time in your life after you have managed to survive and for far too many Black folks that's just not true. You know after we have exhausted all our human resources, we've still not reached the point where there is any surety that we'll survive. There's nothing left to volunteer. So, I think that one of the significant factors that are in place which impacts the disproportionately low numbers of African-Americans who are involved in the work or volunteering to fight AIDS is directly related to what a tremendous effort it takes for Black people to survive.

VM: Evidence of the racial and economic implications of AIDS. We should be concerned, then, about the recent Republican sweep?

PW: Absolutely we should. For Black folk and for Black gay folk, its a disaster. It is apocalyptic. The people who now control the Congress are not concerned about the needs of poor people or historically disenfranchised people, of people who they define as being fringe people. We're not on the radar screen in a positive manner, so we better be concerned about the make-up of Congress.

VM: As Black gay leadership, as Black leadership, what should be some of our strategies? Where should our minds be focused?

PW: I think there are certainly short term and long term strategies that we need to engage in. One of the things that we need to do that is both short term and long term is to educate our communities that they have the responsibility and the power to make a difference. And they have that power because of the right to minimally vote in this country, without regard to race or class and that vote can be a very powerful thing. One of the reasons that we had the type of election results that we had this year was not so much because people voted overwhelmingly for a regressive government, but that people who had something to lose did not vote. Black people did not vote. Gay people did not vote. Poor people did not vote. Single mothers did not vote. All of the people who are targeted by this contract on America I call it a contract "on" America because I think it is a contract "on" America and not a contract "with" America, it's a contract about destroying America. All of those people who are particularly vulnerable to that contract, too many of them, stayed home. And that's the way oppression works. The only thing that is necessary for evil to prevail is for people of goodwill and good conscience to do nothing.

VM: So that it all comes back to the issue of ownership and responsibility.

PW: Absolutely.

VM: You've mentioned numerous times that you're a little surprised when you hear yourself being referred to as a leader. Do you still feel that way?

PW: Well, at this point in my life, I certainly accept that mantle. It's not a mantle that I choose or would chose, but I accept it and the responsibilities that go along with it. If the world was of my choosing we would not need titles like "leader," per se, because so many of us would be doing the things that we need to do to make our lives better. I'm much more comfortable with thinking of myself as a teacher, or possibly, a facilitator or motivator, because I think that at the end of the day what I try to do is live my life with honor and integrity and help other people understand how important it is to live their lives with honor and integrity and how possible it is to do that.

VM: Given the state of the Black gay movement today, are we living our lives with integrity and dignity?

PW: I think alot of us, the vast majority of us, are in fact, living our lives with a tremendous amount of courage, integrity and dignity; more of us than not. I think that many of us are living our lives with a tremendous amount of fear and those two things are not mutually exclusive by any stretch of the imagination.

VM: In terms of the larger gay movement, given that courage and that fear, is there not recognition that our needs, as Black lesbian and gay folks are, perhaps, intrinsically different from the larger gay movement?

PW: I don't know if our needs are intrinsically different from the larger gay movement or the larger Black movement, for that matter. I think that certainly, as Black lesbians and gay men, we have some needs that are unique because of the unique position that we hold in this apex of identity. But, I think that at the end of the day when I have conversations with my straight Black brother about his wishes about life, his dreams, and his aspirations or have discussion with any number of my White gay or lesbian friends, what I discover is that our dreams and our aspirations are very, very similar. I discover that each of us have unique barriers in front of us in the attainment of those dreams and aspirations, but the dreams and aspirations are our common ground. Dreams and aspirations are our common ground for most of us.

VM: Can those barriers be unilateral in terms of race and group? Can there exist barriers for Black lesbian and gay men which don't exist for Black heterosexual men and women?

PW: Certainly. And those things are mostly rooted in the combination of oppression that we face and the historical perspective of where community is. What I mean by that is to deal with racism is one thing or to deal with homophobia is one thing, but to deal with racism, homophobia, and, if you're a lesbian, sexism, all at the same is an entirely different matter. You're not really afforded the opportunity to deal with these things in a serial manner, where you have the one, then the next, and then the third. You're forced to deal with things in parallels, you have to juggle them all at the same time and that does increase the burden. The second problem is really a matter of historical manifestation and that is that the Black lesbian and gay community has not developed the kind of infrastructure that the larger Black community has developed or that the larger gay and lesbian community has developed. That's one of the things that the Black gays and lesbians have to make a commitment to do. We have to build an autonomous Black gay and lesbian infrastructure or community of institutions that are by, about and for us because it is those institutions that then come to the table to negotiate with institutions created by other communities to create the type of collaborative efforts that are going to be necessary for our survival.

VM: Again, back to the need to come home, back to embracing who we are and not being in the closet.

VM: It goes back to what we sacrifice by not being visible, by not claiming ourselves.

PW: Exactly. And it is certainly possible that my experience is unique, but I think not. I certainly don't think that I've made any sacrifices by being visible. I don't think that being clear about who I am has ever affected me in a negative way. It has only affected me in a positive way.

VM: How would you approach that brother or sister who is a school teacher? Who simply cannot afford to be visible?

PW: I am not one of those people who subscribes to some principle that every single person has to come out. That's not what I'm fighting for; what I'm fighting for is for everyone to have that choice to come out.

What I would say to that person is, quite frankly well, Audre Lorde said it, and I certainly don't venture to be anywhere near as smart, articulate or as gifted as Audre Lorde was, but when Audre Lorde said in Litany for Survival, 'When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcome. But when we are silent we are still afraid.' The point is that we stay in the closet or invisible because we are afraid and what we discover is that even when we're invisible we're still afraid, so we might as well be visible because the invisibility does not remove the fear. The invisibility will not protect us in anyway in terms of job security or freedom from rejection because even when we are invisible we are vulnerable to those things. Finally, if we're going to do a reality check, most people know anyway. I can't tell you the endless number of times when I've had Black gay men or lesbians finally come out to their parents, family or friends and the response has been, 'What are you talking about, we knew this all along.' That's the most common response that happens. You know you're fortyfive years old and you've had a male roommate for twenty years. I mean give me a break.

VM: There seems to be a lot of identification of this 'lost' generation in the African-American community. A lot of attention is focused on one out of every four Black men does this, as opposed to three out of every four Black men are doing this. Is there a deficit of youth leadership in the African-American community and in the African-American gay community?

PW: Is there a deficit? Is there a shortage of potential?

VM: Yes.

PW: Absolutely not. There's a myth of scarcity that we have to fight against. There's no shortage of potential and there's no shortage of opportunities. There is certainly a shortage of folks who have discovered how to access the opportunities that are there and how to overcome the barriers that are before us, but there certainly is not a deficit of talent, intelligence or potential.

VM: How do we widen the access to those opportunities? More skills building conferences? More grass roots efforts to reach a broader range of people?

PW: I have to be honest and say that I have no idea how to do that. I certainly don't believe that I've found the magic to that and I haven't spoken to anyone who has engendered in me the confidence to say that they've found the answer. But, what I do know is that any and all of us who are interested in this work need to commit to trying to finance it. Quite frankly, it just may mean getting to a critical mass of folks who've decided that I'm Black, I'm gay or lesbian and, quite frankly, I deserve all that this world has to offer and I deserve to be able to live my life to its fullest potential. What will happen once we reach a critical mass of us who truly believe that, that example, I think, will cause a revolution.

VM: As a person living with HIV disease, what have been some of your sustaining forces?

PW: Some of my major sustaining forces have been understanding the power and the potential of our people and an understanding that we will get there wherever that 'there' of liberation is. We're going to get there I don't have a doubt in my mind. Because of my particular illness, I'm under no delusions that it's going in a timeframe that's convenient to me, but we're going to get there. And I will continue to try to do whatever I can do, with my limited skill set, to move that process as far and as fast as I possibly can.

VM: How is your health?

PW: My health is fine, actually. I'm just hanging in there.

VM: Good. We thank you much for the interview and for your example.

Douglas E. Jones is a novelist from Brooklyn, N.Y. and news editor for this magazine.

PHILL WILSON
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EAT RIGHT! LOOK GREAT!

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D.

It is a good time to start thinking about sound nutrition. Sound nutrition is even more important for people with a history of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and negative body image that results in depression and or low-self esteem. Moreover, good nutrition is important because a healthy diet can help keep up your strength, prevent body tissues from breaking down, and rebuilding tissues that are damaged daily. When you are unable to eat enough food or the right kind of food, your body uses stored nutrients as a source of energy. As a result, your natural defenses are weaker and your body can not fight infection as well. Eating the right foods naturally contributes to weight control.

Weight control can be achieved when an individualized program is implemented and maintained. Proper caloric consumption, coupled with exercise and stress management can improve self-esteem, lower cholesterol, increase energy level, improve sleep patterns, lose or maintain weight and reduce risk of major chronic diseases. Learning good eating habits and establishing an effective exercise program can derive these benefits. For example, consider eating foods lower in fats. Use 1 percent fat milk and low-fat cheeses in many recipes requiring dairy products. Use oils that have less saturated fatty acid(i.e., canola, safflower, soybean, corn and olive).

Fish, chicken, ground turkey without skin are good alternatives to beef and pork. Bake, braise, broil, roast and saute meats because these methods require little extra fat and tend to remove fat contained in the meats. As you prepare your food, try to avoid excessive use of salt or seasoning products that contain salt. An alternative would be to not use salt or use spices/herbs that enhance natural flavors in food.

Should you dine out, avoid foods with heavy sauces, gravies, and salad dressing that cover dishes hidden with fats. Ask questions about how your food is prepared and make requests that will reduce consumption of unnecessary calories and fat.

Asking questions and making requests about your food preparation is an indication that you are in charge of your health.

Without question, most people can not obtain their nutrition and fitness goals by simply being conscious about what they eat. The American Heart Association suggests you exercise 30 to 60 minutes three times a week. If you have not maintained a personal exercise program, you may want to get a physical checkup before you start working out. Should you get the "okay" from your physician, always exercise within your capablities. A solid workout program will include warm up for at least five minutes before, and cool down for five minutes after each 30 to 60 minute workout. For beginners, gradually increase your time as fitness level improves.

Aerobic, continuous exercise for 30 to 60 minutes between warm-up and cool down will generate several benefits. Examples of aerobic exercise include stair climbing, cross-country sking, jogging, swimming, walking, biking, step aerobic, and slide aerobics. These kinds of exercises work large muscle groups and help you get in shape by raising blood flow for an extended time.

Again, make these changes gradually over time. Find friends and love ones that will support your new lifestyle. Be gentle with yourself as you reprogram yourself to institute new life-enchancing changes that will improve the quality of your life. Incorporating these tips gradually into your daily routine will allow you to obtain a fitter, stronger, leaner, and healthier body and mind.

Next Month: Aids and the African American Woman

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D. is a health and behavior scientist.

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What's Going On in Your Life?

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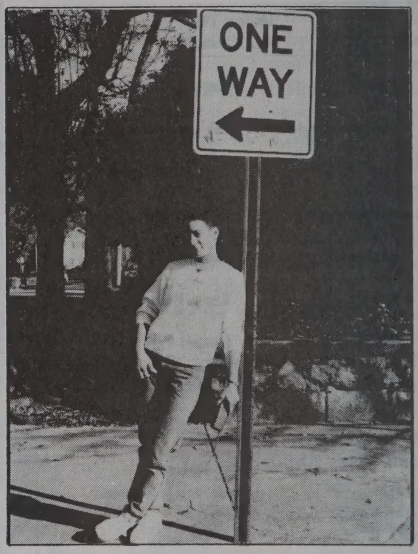


Dear Geanie,

I'm a 40 year old professional female and I'm thinking about coming out to my boss. I think that she suspects that I'm a Lesbian but I'm not sure how she'll react. I always bring a male escort to our company functions. It really sickens me to see all my co-workers with their spouses, knowing that my lover and I would not be well received in this setting. I'm so tired of the double life, but I can't quit this job. What should I do?

Over it!

Dear Over it,

I must first begin by saying that it is important and psychologically healthy to claim oneself and identity as a lesbian. Of course, it follows that to claim one's love and relationship is equally healthy and affirming. And, I must commend your healthy need for both.

And though it is important and self-esteem building to "out" oneself, be sure that you have considered the following and have assured yourself that you are ready to handle the wonderful benefits as well as the consequences of same.

Once considered, your path for action will open before you.

What is the texture of the environment in which you live and work? In other words, is it more conservative or more liberal. This will provide you with a feeling of whether it is tolerate or punitive to who you are.

Though there are certainly legal remedies for injustice to human rights, are you emotionally equipped to handle that thrust should it occur? Please be aware that all punitive action is not overt.

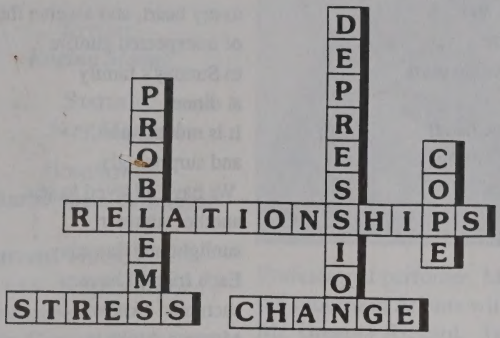
I am not quite clear on how you have surmised that your boss suspects. However, let me just say that if this is so then you are, in fact, able to estimate her reaction to a certain degree. If she suspects, what is her present reaction? Clues are available. Most importantly, be sure that you have clearly examined your own "homophobia" and are confident, comfortable and clear with yourself as a lesbian before you embark on any course of action. This may be a time when your strength and courage of self may be called upon to help others in their struggle with "homophobia".

The question you ask is very difficult and I empathize with your dilemma. However, "outing" at any level is a very personal dilemma and decision which each individual must respond to alone.

There is no blanket answer.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. If you'd like to let us know 'what's going on in your life' address your letters to: **Venus Magazine, PO. BOX 89238, ATLANTA, GA 30312 or Fax (404) 622-8089**

When Life Becomes A Puzzle...



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Father in Flux, Family Fascism and Other Fictitious Sources of Me

P. B. Luciene

There's no clouds in the sky and
no family's called to say there's
someone else we won't be seeing until
Judgement Day, and still
Momma's got her head in one hand,
Phone in the other, tears are falling
like drivebys in South Central;
unexpected, unwelcomed.
Momma's telling her sister,
(asking the world,
pleading with God
calling on angels
cursing devils who took
too much notice in her own)
what could she have done wrong;
too much love, too much work
too much time with her,
too little time with
no father

And outside the sun's happy
that its face isn't covered
with clouds and tears.

Inside, my house is a carefulness,
the way my mother walks by
and the dog's ears prick up
only when doors open to let another
cousin, Aunt, Uncle,
sister, brother, niece,
father
into the wake of my youth,
and each walks around my space,
dodges my gaze and
fills the halls outside my door
with whispers and
shaking heads,
fearing the power I now have,
thinking that I'll once again
speak the words that are
my life-shout, my unchanged truth
to my heart, and assume the unlife
of unexpected gunfire
to Sunday's family
at dinner.
It is months past,
and surprisingly,
We have all lived to see
another summer,
sunlight and Saturday.
Each friend I have,
each man I know,
Momma thinks is
where I am,
when I am,
how I am,
but more importantly she knows
they have not
lost their smiles,
changed their walks,
lost their right to be
black, male, alive or
failed to help her understand
who you hold and who you love
is not what makes a man.
That is the doctrine she gives,
she delivers from her pulpit
to Aunts that wonder
on their phones
under the roofs
they share with sons
which also lack fathers,
have holes in their heritages,
across the miles of family,
and each ponders the
possibility of loving
a boy who overnight became
a man in a different
kind of
way.

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

NAME:
Taisha Khan

AGE:
36

STYLIST:
Regina Simms

STATUS:
Very Married

HOMETOWN:
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Current Titles:
Miss Knoxville, Tennessee
Miss Georgia Continental
Miss Black USA 1st R.U.

Former Titles
Miss Peachtree State
Miss Black Atlanta
Miss Metro Georgia

Professional perfomer, Ms. Taisha Kahn resides in the suburbs of Atlanta with her husband of 10 years Mr. Gregory Richard. Taisha constantly tours the southern eastern states with her electrifying performances and never fails to highlite Aids Awareness in each show. Ms. Kahn has been known to donate her entire winnings to charitable causes. At the beginning of each show, Taisha usually dedicates her performances to the memory of her greatest fan and mentor; her mother, Mrs. May Frances Fleming.

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The 411
ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

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WATERWORKS CAFE	109 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B/House Show
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
PEARL GARDEN	107 Luckie (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50%	Top 40 R&B, Show
THE OTHERSIDE	1924 Piedmont	Wed.	Women 50% Men 50%	House R&B, Show

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OUT ON CAMPUS

SPELL IT OUT!

The Spelman College Lesbian Bisexual Alliance has been on the campus of this historically black institution as an underground organization in some form of another for at least two decades. We became and officially Chartered organization last year in the fall of 1993. A freshman at the time, Kendra we only know her first name), spoke to Dr. Johnnetta Cole about the need for a chartered lesbian/ bisexual group on campus. Dr. Cole agreed that this was important, and agreed to help with the process. The year after Kendra's senior year a group was chartered. Karen Napper, Tamera Haywood, Antonia Randolph, and Wendi O'Neal along with five other anonymous students made up the group for it's first year as the visible Lesbian/ Bisexual Alliance.

This year we have a group of five people who work consistently with the Alliance. We have sponsored several forums on homphobia in the black community, had safer sex parties thanks to the women of Sisterlove, a black womens' Aids project in Atlanta, and participated in tributes to the life and work of Audre Lorde on campus with Zam (an Atlanta based African -American lesbian support group.) We have walked in the Aids Walk Atlanta, co-sponsored a forum on breast cancer with students from the Southern Organizing Committee, an undoing homophobia workshop at a young women's health conference, and had an annual National Coming Out Day Celebration. What we have been most evolved with this year has been a month long, four part series of discussions on spiritually in the queer community. The end of the series was a lecture from out black bisexual scholar/activist, and professor in the school of divinity at Howard University, Dr. Elias Farajaje-Jones.

In the upcoming Spring semester we plan to sponsor reading groups, and "Queer week", a week long celebration of being queer and out-proud. We meet every Thursday, at 7:30 in the Absolm Jones Chapel of Fair St. in Atlanta University Center. Please call (404) 525-8639 or write us at 710 Peachtree St. apt. 126 Atlanta, Georgia 30308 to contact Wendi O'Neal or Antonia Randolph (co-chairs).

If you or an organization on your campus is African American Gay/Lesbian or Bisexual and would like to be featured in this monthly column please contact the Venus office at (404) 622-8069.

FOOD

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Lois A. Grant, B.S.

DR. KING'S , : FAVORITE MEAL

Those of us who grew up in the south, like Martin, Jr., may remember being in church all day on Sunday and several times during the week. As I recall, on Sundays when the pastor was invited over for dinner the main attraction was fried chicken. I suppose that's where Martin, Jr., got his love of fried chicken.

From this very simplistic background arose not an extraordinary man but an ordinary man doing extraordinary things. His favorite meal was one that most of us have eaten at least once.

FRIED CHICKEN

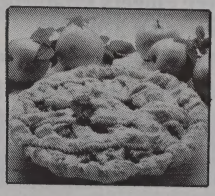
Yield: 6 servings
2 1/2 pound chicken (fryer), cut up
1 cup flour
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
Butter or margarine Shortening

Wash and drain the chicken. while chicken is draining, mix the flour, salt, and pepper in a large bag. Drop the chicken pieces in the bag with the flour mixture and shake until all the pieces are thoroughly coated.

Place margarine or butter, and shortening in a large heavy skillet using a mixture of half margarine or butter and half shortening. when this mixture is melted it should be at a depth of at least 1 inch. Heat to a temperature of 350 degree F on a deep fat thermometer or until a bread cube browns in 60 seconds. Shake any excess flour off each piece of chicken before adding it to the hot fat mixture. To avoid getting a possible burn use tongs to place the chicken in the hot fat. Make sure that you do not crowd the chicken in the skillet. put a few pieces in at one time or use two frying pans so that the chicken fries evenly Cook on both sides about 15 minutes or until chicken is golden brown on both sides. Remove chicken from the pan and drain on plate or sheet pan lined with paper towels. Remove from paper towels and place on serving platter when well drained.

Use safety precautions when frying chicken by making sure that you use tongs when you turn the chicken or remove it from the skillet. Do not over fill the skillet or it could spill over and start a fire. Make sure you lower the flame to medium or medium high when frying the chicken to avoid burning the chicken or yourself.

APPLE PIE



6 apples
1 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon grownd mace
1 teaspoon ground mace
1 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons flour
1 recipe Plain Pastry (can substitute 2 ready made pie crusts).

Peel and slice apples. Sift dry ingredients together and mix with apples. Line pie pan with pastry, fill with apple mixture, dot with butter and cover with top crust. Bake in very hot oven (450 degree F) 15 minutes: reduce temperature to moderate (350 degree F) and bake 45 minutes longer. Makes 1 (9-inch) pie. Be well and enjoy life to the fullest. Happy eating!

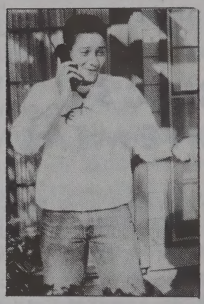
Next Month: Heart Healthy Foods/Loving Yourself and Significant Other.

Lois A. Grant, B.S., Foodservice Management, taught Catering/Culinary Management and is owner of Grant Foodservice Unlimited

ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info.! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

MEN



- **Black & White Men Together (404) 892-BWMT**
- **2nd Sunday Discussion Group (404) 629-0583 P.O. Box 1574 Decatur, Georgia 30031**
- **Aids Education Services for Minorities P.O. Box 87277 Atlanta, Georgia 30337 (404) 753-2900, (404) 753-7733 voice**
- **Boyz of Distinction P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, GA 30532**

WOMEN

- **Black Lesbians with Children (404) 498-3815**
- **Hospitality Atlanta (404) 627-1630**
- **Positive Black Lesbians United P.O. Box 665 Avondale Estates, Georgia 30002**
- **Silver Fingers Productions**
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- **Out Reach, Inc. (404) 346-3922 or 1-800-441-2437**
- **Home Free Ministry (404) 818-2033 P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Georgia 30301**

CAMPUS

- **Spelman College Lesbian Bisexual Alliance 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Georgia 30308 (404) 524-8639**

TRAVEL TIP OF THE MONTH

by David Washington
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Have you considered your winter get-away yet? There's a fun place that's very Gay & Lesbian friendly. It's an easy trip from Atlanta, usually less than a $200.00 round trip (flight only). It has warm beaches and oh, so fabulous clubs. Guess where!! Give up? The Florida Keys of course! Excellent accomodations for Gals only and Guys only. **Plan early.**

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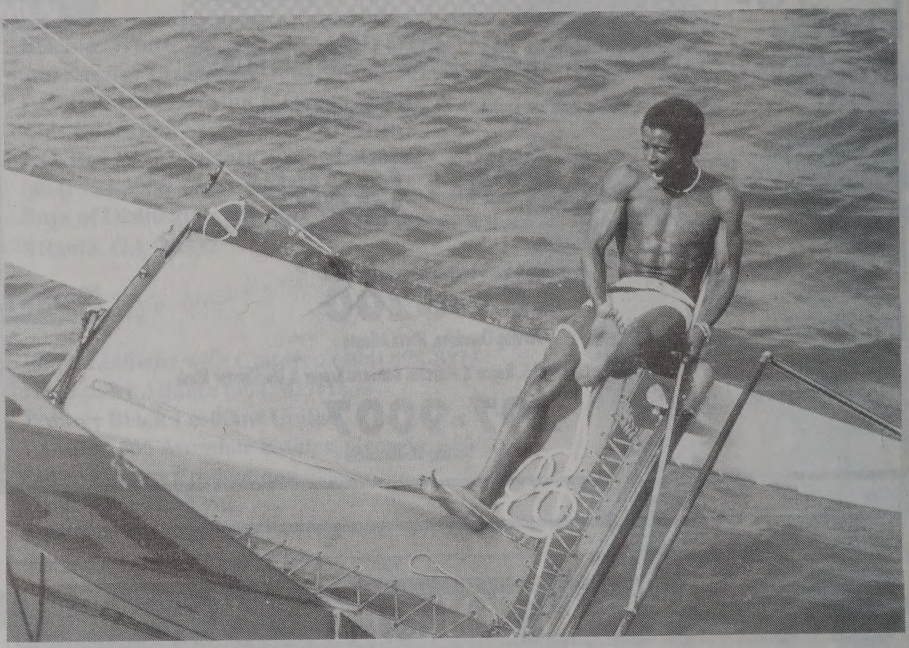

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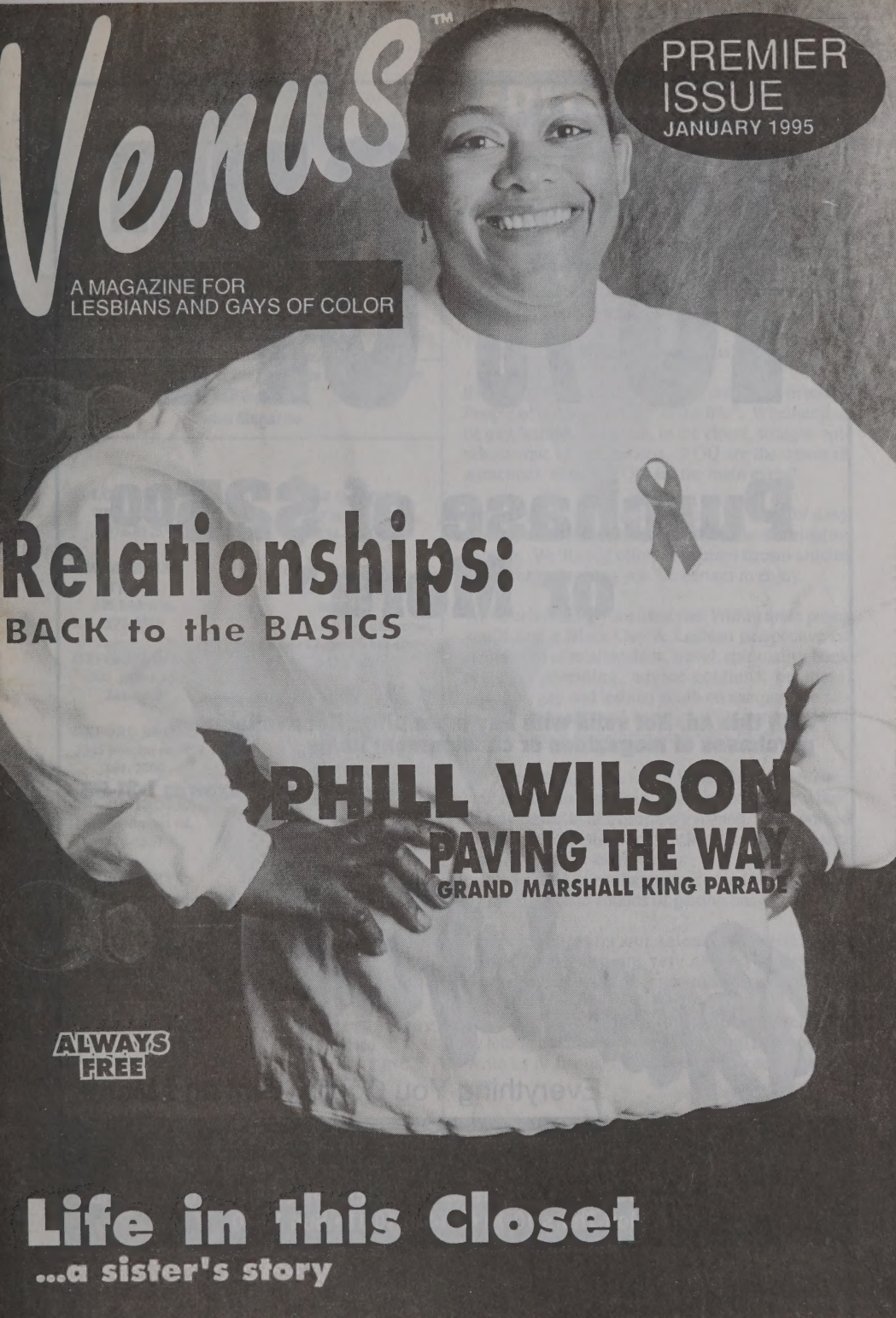
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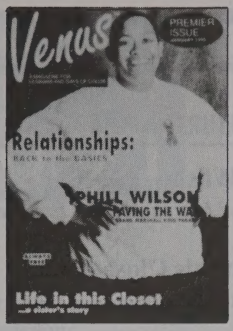

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SISTER LOVE,INC.
763-7733
1432 donnelly ave.

CHAOS at NIKO'S
655 highland ave.
681-1681

EDITORS NOTES

Imagine a magazine reflecting the everyday lives of African American lesbians and gay men! It's definitely an idea who's time has come. Actually, it's long over due. I mean really, after a long day at work, I'd like to come home, put my feet up and occasionally flip through a periodical that speaks directly to ME, a black lesbian living and working in contemporary America.

Welcome to Venus!

Every exciting issue of **Venus** has only YOU in mind! People of color who are " in the life". Whether that be gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, in the closet, straight-but-not-narrow, or just curious. YOU are the center of attraction! Honey, YOU are the main event!

Venus, gives us a place to be! We'll offer easy reading articles that promote self love, and alternative choices. We'll even offer some main stream articles and information that you are certain to enjoy.

We're celebrating your lifestyle! Within these pages you'll find a Black Gay & Lesbian perspective on such topics as relationships, travel, spirituality, book reviews, parenting, advice columns, business, romance, gay and lesbian youth on campus, the arts as well as health and beauty. With every issue of Venus, there's something especially for YOU!

We're celebrating the life of **Venus Landin! Venus** was an African American Lesbian Activist for whom the magazine is affectionately named. She worked to raise consciousness and participation in the Atlanta Gay & Lesbian community. Her death in 1992 created a void in our hearts that could only be filled by the sights and sounds of getting busy!

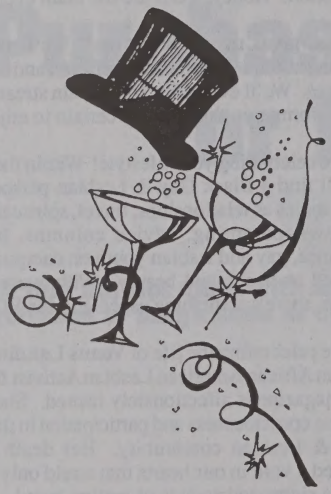
We're celebrating our talents, as writers and professionals who are very excited to deliver a magazine that you'll be proud to share with friends!

We invite you to further participate in this celebration by letting us know what you think, and how you feel. Write us or fax us! We are expecting to hear from you!

So, go ahead! Kick back, relax and curl up with one of the best things that ever happened to YOU...

Venus™ MAGAZINE

HAPPY NEW YEAR



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Life In This Closet

I am an African-American woman.
I am thirty something.
I am a professional manager type.
I own a home.
I have a dog.
I have two children.
I have a husband and have been married almost two decades.
I am a lesbian.
No, you didn't read wrong. I am a lesbian, always have been,
always will be.

I grew up in a small southern town with my entire family to take care of me and my brothers. My mother, my aunts, my grandma all very domineering women. I was always taught to go to school, study hard, work hard, be a lady, and I would get a good husband. In the eyes of my family the purpose for being a woman was to do these things and of course have children. I loved these women. I trusted them, and believed them. I felt horrible growing up knowing secretly I didn't measure up, but I was obedient and tried to do as I was told I performed daily for my family, did drugs most of the time and kept my secrets.

I went to camp the summer of my fifteenth birthday and fell in love with a girl attending camp also. We became close and soon after, intimate. My happiness, my new found self, was more than I had ever imagined. I loved her. I wanted to see her after camp ended. We talked on the phone. We wrote to each other and made plans to see each other. She lived in another town. A family member of hers arranged a sleep over for us. I could hardly wait to get there. When I arrived all hell broke loose! Her mother had read my letters to her and decided I was a bad influence and not the kind of person her daughter needed as a friend; she wanted her daughter to have "normal friends". In a matter of minutes my life had been destroyed. I tried calling her. She was afraid her parents would kill her if she had anymore contact with me. I never wanted harm to come to her. I started doing drugs again and sleeping with any man that could produce an erection.

I met a nice guy, got married, had kids and made a commitment to "live normally". My parents are happy. My family sees me as a success. My children are growing up well, and my husband is a good man.....I am a lesbian in the closet behind the clothes. I've had three affairs , all of the women in the same situation as my own.

There are a lot a us living this lie for different reasons. Some women say they are bisexual because they have sex with men. When I ask if they are sexually attracted to men, they say no. For me **bisexual** is a sexual attraction for both sexes. I don't have that. I am a lesbian.

Women who know the truth about me and are out, treat me as an outcast. Women who are straight and don't really know, make dyke jokes.

I live or maybe survive it all. I love women. I am not confused about my sexual orientation, I made a choice to make others happy instead of myself. One day the courage I lack may come. I don't know. Writing this has been liberating in a strange sort of way; even if it's only temporary. When I put my pen down I go back to my life. I am not alone, but lonely.

It's not easy being a lesbian in this closet I've created.

VOLUNTEER KICK OFF!

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Release the Shackles

by Kamau Ifoma

About a year ago, while being interviewed by Oprah, Maya Angelou expressed a life changing event which had happened to her some forty years ago. While studying "Lessons In Truth", the group facilitator had Maya repeat an affirmation which she had never considered before. It simply stated "God Loves Me"! Initially, she reported, this was very difficult for her to imagine or repeat. Being a "Negro: woman, in the 1950's, a survivor of many perpetrations, she had never fathomed the possibility that God could and did actually Love Maya. Well, she went on to discuss how this simple message, God Loves Me, changed her life.

"For so long we have been pushed outside of the traditional Spiritual belief systems because of our choice of Love."

We have been conditioned, convinced and faced to believe that God has no place for us in His/Her/Its universe. Many gays and lesbians sit in congregations, each and every Sunday morning to hear the messages of condemnation of all the sinners. Messages that teach of loving the sinner but not the sin. They offer their contributions (tithes, etc.) for this bashing and then return to the world believing that they are sinners with no hope of salvation. They set up patterns of self destruction because of this conditioned belief. They learn to hate themselves, they teach others that it's OK to hate them, also. They hide behind the many mask of perpetration, attempting to convince the world that maybe the mask itself will place them back in the graces of God. And under the masks they continue to destruct.

As African American Homosexuals (Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transpersons, Same-sex attracted or however you may identify yourself) it is time for us to release the shackles that have bound us outside the grace of the Universal Creator. It is time for us to claim for ourselves that "Yes, God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me. God Loves Me! You should ring this statement out with the fullness of all the energy and emotion that you can exert. It is the truth. Not just for a "chosen people" but for all of creation. Whatever your chosen means of expressing, celebrating and worshipping your Divine self maybe, it is important that you allow yourself to celebrate your whole, total self. Your gender, race, height, weight, shoe size, career, talents, etc. This means all of you. Including your sexuality. Sexuality is just as much a gift, a God created gift, as the rest of you.

Rev. Kamau Ifoma Founder Home Free Ministry

See Page 8

PROFILE OF A MAN

NAME:
Kamau Ifoma

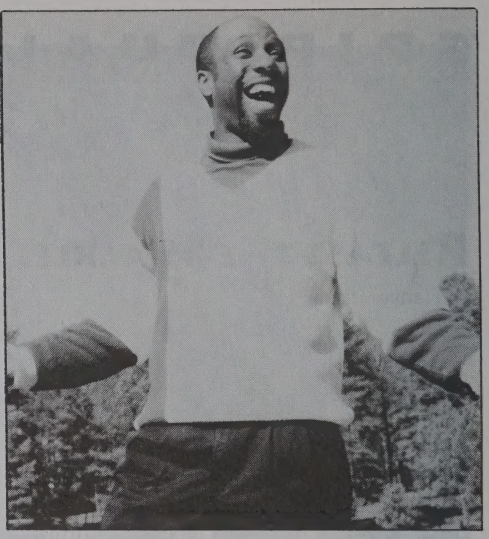
AGE:
"ageless"

STATUS:
happy, free, available!

HOMETOWN:
Gary, Indiana

CAREER:
Minister

LAST BOOK READ:
Celestine Prophecy



Founder of Home Free Ministry, Rev. Kamau enjoys watching the spirit of people unfold as they step out on faith. He also says his favorite way to work out is dancing!

SPIRITUALITY

Continued from pg. 27

It is our desire to utilize this section on Spirituality to discuss and demonstrate the presence of the Universal Creator, Spirit, Allah, Jehovah, Brahma, the Orisha's, God in all life. We plan to inform you of the many traditions and beliefs systems which embraces all sexual expressions. We shall offer direction to those who are looking for spiritual acceptance. We shall feature ministries, churches, groups, religions, cultures and traditions, etc. which have unconditional open door policies for all people. We shall discuss the myths which have been taught to us and present the truths as we know them to be. Above all, this shall be a platform of exposing and demonstrating Love. We have no desire to fall into the trap of using the methods of others to push a belief system. Condemnation and fear will not reveal itself through this section. Love, Love and only Unconditional Love shall abound. Whatever it may take for us to come to the understanding as a community, that "God Loves Me!", this is our goal.

If you belong to an organization which teaches unconditional love and you would be presented here in this section of Venus Magazine we would like to hear from you. Please contact Kamau Ifoma at the magazine for further information.

Home Free Ministry
A Place of Spiritual Unfoldment

REV. KAMAU IFOMA
Founding Minister

P.O. Box 668
Atlanta, GA 30301
(404) 818-2033

...Where God Expresses Itself As You!

EDUCATION

AIDS EDUCATION/ SERVICES FOR MINORITIES (AESM),

As its name implies, AESM has been providing Aids education and services to individuals with HIV/AIDS since 1990. The founders, Rudy Carn, Mae Reed, and the late Madam Edna Brown began reaching out to the African-American gay and lesbian community in effort to fill the void. There were no community-based AIDS service organizations providing education on AIDS prevention in a culturally appropriate framework for our community.

If you have frequented any of the local bars, the Pearl Garden, Lorretta's, Traxx, or the Otherside, you probably have met an outreach worker of AESM passing out condoms and literature about testing sites, safer sex practices, etc. Outreach workers are availabe to answer any questions about these topics.

A major accomplishment of AIDS Education / Services for Minorities is the AESM House. AESM House is a six person transitional home for African-American Gay men who have HIV. The residents of AESM House are provided a safe and supportive living environment,along with social services needed to help make a transition into the community and regain control of their lives. Many of these individuals have been rejected by family, friends or lovers. Others have lost incomes due to illnesses or discrimination. However they arrive at AESM House, all are given the help they need to regain control.

Our community is disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Rudy Carn, the driving force behind AESM has been a tireless advocate in the battle to insure that the African-American Gay and Lesbian community obtain needed funds for programs which provide education on the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS and also provide services to our brothers and sisters who are already infected.

Given the present political climate, more advocates are needed to protect the gains which have been made and to fight for an even bigger slice of the funding "pie".

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PROFILE OF A WOMAN

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Beverly Hall

AGE:
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STATUS:
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RELATIONSHIPS

BACK TO THE BASICS!

U. Vincent D.

"Where did you spend the holidays?" This question can have serious implications. At minimum it forces us, however briefly, to make an assessment of all of our relationships. Let's go there. Where DID you spend the holidays? Did you spend it with your family of origin (Parents, grand parents, and other blood relatives)? Deciding when to spend time with your family of origin may not be a difficult and stressful decision depending on your cognitive and emotional responses to these questions: Will both parents be there? How well do you get along with your parents and other relatives? Will someone ask you when are you going to get married? Do your parents know that you are in the life? If they know, are they comfortable with it? Do you have a partner? Would your parents invite him/her to their home?

It is a safe bet that most of us had negative responses to these questions. It is more likely that our relationship with our parents and other relatives is emotionally strained. It is more likely that they will act as if they did not pick up on your "I am in the life, I am not going to get married" cues. If they acknowledge that we are in the life, it is unlikely that they would invite our partners to the family gatherings.

In spite of these concerns, some of us decide to spend time , (holidays, birthdays, etc.), with our parents-assuming we have a choice. We reason that we only have to put up with their stuff for a couple of days or we buy into their guilt trip, but the essence of it is that family needs to be together, (especially during the holidays), and there is something wrong with us for not wanting to come home-even if coming home, means being abused. Many of us do not take the guilt trip, or put up with their stuff even for a couple of days. We decide, instead, to spend our time with our family-of-choice (girlfriend, boyfriends, friends, etc.)

Our family-of-choice is critical to our emotional survival, especially if we are unable to turn to our family-of-origin for emotional support.

How are you doing with your family-of-choice? My guess is that you have experienced at least one loss due to AIDS, violence or irreconcileable differences. Because the holidays have illuminated loses, we need to take special care of ourselves to help cope with these loses.

Although each one of us has different definitions of taking care of ourselves, I recommend the following; chose to always be in supportive environments, places where you do not have to wear a mask; places where you will not be shamed having and expressing feeling, places where there are safety and trust. If this means being alone, then so let it be. Although, my hope is that no one would have to be alone because there isn't a safe place to go.

Of the family-of-choice issues we face, our romantic relationships appear to be the most challenging. Getting together and staying together may seem like a nightmare. Some of us have become disillusioned and have resigned to being single. Instead of investing in finding a partner, we invest in our careers, vocations, children, pets, etc. What makes finding and keeping partners who have got it together such an odyssey? Is it not your experience that ninety percent of the brothers you meet, (perhaps just as high for sisters), are single and looking for basically the same thing? We say that it's not all about looks; we want someone who has other things going on. We say we are tired of going to the bars; we want someone who likes staying at home, quiet times and jazz. We say it is not all about sex; we must have commitment. What's going on? Something is seriously wrong

with this picture. If so many of us are looking for basically the same thing, then why are so many of us single, and hating it? What is preventing us from getting together and staying together?

Now, if you are one of the fortunate few who have found a partner who is all that, you might be wishing that he/she came with a warranty that reads, "partner for life, minor problems, guaranteed to work or will replace him/her with a partner of greater or equal value." Sorry, actually if there was a warranty, it would read, "This will be one of the most pleasurable yet painful experience since your childhood or your last break up. Handle with self-knowledge, love, patience and commitment or you will be single again".

I do not mean to suggest that being single is necessarily a terrible experience. Actually, being single allows us an opportunity to work on improving the chances that our next relationship will be healthy and long lasting.

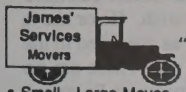
This work includes conscious preparation. It is not enough to hope to find "the right person". The first step you must take it's to put a hold on having a serious relationship until you have finished your conscious preparation. It is okay to date, but resist trying to find "Mr. Right" or "Ms. Right". Neither exists, and I guarantee you are more likely to find "Mr. Wrong" or "Ms. Wrong". Putting a hold on serious relationships is especially critical if you ended a meaningful relationship during the last year. That is because you will likely need that much time to wash that man or woman out of your hair. If you don't, you will contaminate your next relationship with those unresolved issues. The relationship will eventually become sick and die.

The second step is to work on your own issues. This means learning as much as you can about what makes you tick. This process includes understanding how your childhood experience contribute to how you perceive and relate to others. Also, how much or little you adapted to the relationship model that your caretakers presented. It is about making unconscious issues conscious; it is about listening to the tapes in you head and editing them so that you can rid yourself of negative messages, i.e. homophobic and racist experiences. In some cases professional counseling may be necessary to assist in this process, especially if traumatic experiences such as emotional, physical and sexual abuse were recorded on these tapes.

The third step is to learn as much as possible about relationships. Most of what we know about relationships came from our caretakers, usually parents. And I would suggests that what many of us learned, is not what we would like to replicate in our relationships. Not only was much of it unhealthy, but some of the dynamics do not apply to same-sex relationships. I caution, that if you do not adhere to the kind of preparation that is being proposed in this article, you will likely replicate any unhealthy dynamics in your caretakers relationships.

We can learn about relationships by reading books and articles, going to seminars and workshops, watching programs on television, going to counseling, etc. Whatever your choice, you must inform yourself about the complexities of romantic partnerships. It is the lack of understanding of these dynamics that contribute to high rate of failed relationships. As black men and woman in the life, we have additional challenges that threaten our attempts to come together and stay together. We must counter these threats with knowledge. Our survival is dependent on our ability to come together through love and respect for each other. I will give some suggestions on how to do this in our next issue.

U. Vincent D, is a licensed psychotherapist.
You may write to him with your questions and comments in care of ***Venus Magazine*** *at P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312 or you may send him a fax by dialing (404) 622-8089.*



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BUSINESS

PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVER : WRITE A WILL

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq.

Eric could only sit back and watch as his meager belongings were loaded onto the van. He and Donald had been together for three years. Theirs was a special relationship that only existed in the romance novels or story books. Until that fateful day three months ago, they thought they would be together forever. Then, that drunken driver changed all that. Donald did not wake up to feel the pain he would have felt. The day after the memorial service, Donald's brother asked Eric when he would be leaving the home they had shared. Eric was stunned, he had helped pay the mortgage, help plant the garden and build the deck, things that he knew Donald would have wanted him to have he was now told he had no right to. Now he was being asked to leave as though he had been some guest. The attorney was nice, but as he said, there was nothing he could do. Donald had left no will. Their relationship was not legally recognized so in the eyes of the law, Eric had no rights. Now as he sat watching he could only wish...

If you think that only happens in books and movies, think again. It could happen to you. The reality is that we are not protected by the laws of interstate succession in Georgia. Should you or your lover die or face death, there are no provisions in law governing your status to that person. You would be considered a friend at best an intruder at worse. There are things you can do to remedy this.

It should be looked at as a means of assuming control over your life and your belongings however meager they may seem.

Most lawyers recommend that you have three documents A Will, Living Will, and Power of Attorney.

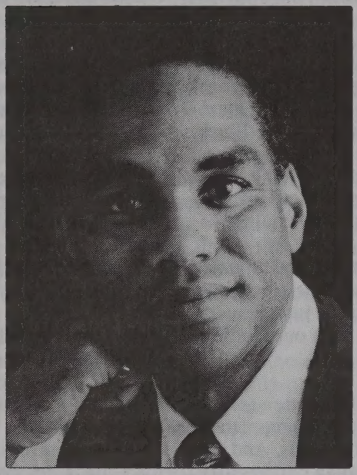
A Will outlines your wishes should you die. It specifies a person to carry out your wishes. This person is called the executor or Administrator of your estate created by your Will. The Executor can have as broad a set of authority as you wish. He or she is required to carry out your wishes as specified in the Will unless legally unable to do so. There are no requirements as to who you can name as Executor. As a general rule, this person should be someone you feel confident will carry out your wishes and is strong enough to fight those who would do otherwise. He or she should be someone you feel confident will carry out your wishes and can be a friend, relative, caretaker, the choice is yours. Within the Will, you can include plans for your funeral or burial in as much detail as you wish. In fact, some people have planned the entire service including the program. Most are not that detailed. In general, the Will outlines your desired distribution of personal and real property, house, care, jewelry, etc. you own at the time of death. Distribution can be to and individual or individuals. It can be to a charitable organization or business. There is no requirement that you have a sizable amount of property. Small items such as jewelry, clothing, electronic equipment, even plants can be made a part of your will and distributed as you desire. It should be noted that your Will can be changed or revoked at anytime and replaced with a new Will.

A Living Will outlines your wishes in the event you have a terminal condition as outlined by Georgia statute. It governs the administration of life sustaining devices and the giving of food and water. You choose what circumstance you wish the Living Will provisions to take effect and then you choose the type of care you wish to receive. It does not preclude administration of pain medication, or efforts to make you comfortable during this time. It merely addresses issues dealing with sustaining life. As with a Will, a Living Will can be changed or revoked at anytime. A power of Attorney is authority you grant to someone to act on your behalf when you are unable to do so. It grants this person the authority to do those acts you specify in the document granting the power of attorney. Those powers can be as broad as you wish. From granting authority to do all those things you can legally do were you able, to granting power over your medical care and or financial affairs. Take control over your life. That is the only way we as African American Gays & Lesbians can be sure the ones we love and care for are protected. Remember, the law does not protect us. Don't let Eric's story become yours.

Herman R. Tunsil, Esq. is an African American out gay attorney in private practice in Atlanta.

PHILL WILSON:
PAVING THE WAY!

Douglas E. Jones



From his vantage point in the Black community, the Black gay community, the Black gay community living with AIDS, Phill Wilson offers reflections on a multitude of issues. Wilson is eloquent, his diplomacy accommodating without being evasive. This January, under the directorship of Phill Wilson as Grand Marshall, the King parade will commence its annual celebration. It is not significant that Mr. Wilson is gay. There have been other openly gay Grand Marshalls of the King parade: Barney Frank, the Congressman, Peri Jude Radecic, and Ivy Young, both of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, to name three. But, is it significant that the King Center choose Mr. Wilson as Grand Marshall because of the fact that he is an openly gay, African-American man? Venus Magazine asked that question and many others in our conversation with Wilson, the Policy Director of AIDS Project Los Angeles and the founder of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum (BGLLF).

Venus Magazine: Given the image of the King Center as a conservative African-American institution, is it historically significant that you, an African-American gay man living with AIDS, are going to be the Grand Marshall for this year's parade?

Phill Wilson: Well, I really don't know if it's significant, that's a question you would have to ask them [the King Center]. Certainly, I'm not the first gay person to be a grand marshall I know of at least two or three openly gay or lesbian people who have been Grand Marshall of the parade. I believe this will be the first time that they've had a Black gay man as the Grand Marshall, and probably the first time that they've had a person with AIDS. I'm not in Atlanta, so I can't speak to the King Center's reputation there, but certainly my impression of the King Center would not be to characterize them as being a conservative Black institution. As a matter of fact, the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, which is the national Black gay and lesbian organization that I founded, has had a very strong relationship with the King Center since its inception. We held a summit on homophobia in the Black community as early as 1988 which was hosted by the King Center and convened by Martin Luther King III.

VM: Considering the King Center's position in terms of leadership on the issue, how does that reflect back to the overriding sentiment of homophobia within the Black community?

PW: Although, to my knowledge, Dr. King didn't explicitly address the issues surrounding gay and lesbian people in any of his writings, certainly he addressed the issues implicitly in his writings and his speeches. Mrs. King, on a number of occasions most recently at the National Skills Building Conference held in Atlanta during November has explicitly spoken about the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the civil rights struggle. She also stated that she believes, were her husband alive today, that he would have included gays and lesbians in any civil rights works that he was a part of. Mrs. King also spoke out strongly during the military activity, stating that gays and lesbians should not be arbitrarily dismissed simply on the basis of sexual orientation.

VM: So, within the Black community, are we finally moving to grappling with the issues of sexuality and homophobia?

PW: Absolutely. I think that the issue around sexual minority and sexual diversity is one with which the Black community is struggling. Certainly we have our own version of the religious, radical right, if you will. But, I think that the issue for Black folks is rooted more in fundamental strategies around survival and although I don't agree that we have to

make some of the choices that others seem to believe we have to make, I do believe that what motivates Black people, Black leaders in particular, to make some of the choices that can be perceived as homophobic, are really not about homosexuality or positions about gay and lesbian people, but more rooted in fears and issues about survival.

VM: Meaning that we are coming to a prioritization about embracing the struggle as Black folks versus Black gay folks.

PW: Right. Nevertheless, as Black gay men and lesbians, I think we have an obligation to challenge those issues and positions. From my point of view, to the extent that homophobia exists in the Black community, and clearly it does, it partially exists because not enough of us have been willing to be openly gay and lesbian in the context of our communities and the work of our communities.

VM: You have often talked about the need for us to create that space in which to come home; the space in which to be able to simultaneously interact with society on the cultural level and with our families on issues of sexuality.

PW: Exactly. The truth of the matter is our communities need us. They need us now more than ever and they need our talent and our skills. And the only way for us to deal with that particularly considering the rising Black nationalist movement which sometimes perceives us as a threat is, quite frankly, to make sure that we hold on to our legacy and our birthright. No one has a right to take our Blackness away from us. It is not an acceptable paradigm to say that one needs to choose between one's sexual orientation and one's race. It is an untenable paradigm to put one in. We need to reject that and say, 'No we are not going to make that choice and we are not going to give up our communities, our families, our churches, and our homes.

VM: How do we straddle that fence? How do we claim ourselves?

PW: First of all I don't think that there's a fence that needs to be straddled. I think it's a matter of claiming all of who we are. Do you ever ask a Black woman, Well are you a woman or are you Black?' It is not a question that you ask. Do you ever ask a child, 'Well are you a child or are you Black?' Or if you're left-handed or tall, 'Are you lefthanded or Black?' etc. You don't ask those questions. Now, granted, in some of those situations there are not enough socio-political implications connected to those identities, so the parallel is not complete. But, nevertheless, at the end of the day any contribution that I or we can make to a community that desperately needs our contribution is enhanced when we (a) claim all of who we are and (b) don't have to invest time and energy in hiding who we are. So, the Black community, in the final analysis, benefits by Black gays and lesbians being able to be who they are within our community. I hope that that is, in fact, a significant part of the message in my being selected the Grand Marshall in this year's celebration because that certainly has been the way I have lived my life. I have attempted to integrate the all of my life into the all of who I am and what I do whether or not the specific venue I am working in is a "Black" venue or a "gay" venue or its an "AIDS" venue, I bring my vision of the world, which is the vision of a Black gay man living with AIDS, to those venues.

VM: People of color, be they Black or Latino, constitute a disproportionate number of those whom are affected by HIV and AIDS, but, on the reverse side, we represent such a small percentage of those who are in volunteer and educational capacities. Are we ignoring ourselves?

PW: I think that there is still a tremendous amount of denial within the Black community about AIDS. But, in addition to that, to be completely honest, being able to volunteer in any capacity is a luxury. It means that you have time in your life after you have managed to survive and for far too many Black folks that's just not true. You know after we have exhausted all our human resources, we've still not reached the point where there is any surety that we'll survive. There's nothing left to volunteer. So, I think that one of the significant factors that are in place which impacts the disproportionately low numbers of African-Americans who are involved in the work or volunteering to fight AIDS is directly related to what a tremendous effort it takes for Black people to survive.

VM: Evidence of the racial and economic implications of AIDS. We should be concerned, then, about the recent Republican sweep?

PW: Absolutely we should. For Black folk and for Black gay folk, its a disaster. It is apocalyptic. The people who now control the Congress are not concerned about the needs of poor people or historically disenfranchised people, of people who they define as being fringe people. We're not on the radar screen in a positive manner, so we better be concerned about the make-up of Congress.

VM: As Black gay leadership, as Black leadership, what should be some of our strategies? Where should our minds be focused?

PW: I think there are certainly short term and long term strategies that we need to engage in. One of the things that we need to do that is both short term and long term is to educate our communities that they have the responsibility and the power to make a difference. And they have that power because of the right to minimally vote in this country, without regard to race or class and that vote can be a very powerful thing. One of the reasons that we had the type of election results that we had this year was not so much because people voted overwhelmingly for a regressive government, but that people who had something to lose did not vote. Black people did not vote. Gay people did not vote. Poor people did not vote. Single mothers did not vote. All of the people who are targeted by this contract on AmericaI call it a contract "on" America because I think it is a contract "on" America and not a contract "with" America, it's a contract about destroying America. All of those people who are particularly vulnerable to that contract, too many of them, stayed home. And that's the way oppression works. The only thing that is necessary for evil to prevail is for people of goodwill and good conscience to do nothing.

VM: So that it all comes back to the issue of ownership and responsibility.

PW: Absolutely.

VM: You've mentioned numerous times that you're a little surprised when you hear yourself being referred to as a leader. Do you still feel that way?

PW: Well, at this point in my life, I certainly accept that mantle. It's not a mantle that I choose or would chose, but I accept it and the responsibilities that go along with it. If the world was of my choosing we would not need titles like "leader," per se, because so many of us would be doing the things that we need to do to make our lives better. I'm much more comfortable with thinking of myself as a teacher, or possibly, a facilitator or motivator, because I think that at the end of the day what I try to do is live my life with honor and integrity and help other people understand how important it is to live their lives with honor and integrity and how possible it is to do that.

VM: Given the state of the Black gay movement today, are we living our lives with integrity and dignity?

PW: I think alot of us, the vast majority of us, are in fact, living our lives with a tremendous amount of courage, integrity and dignity; more of us than not. I think that many of us are living our lives with a tremendous amount of fear and those two things are not mutually exclusive by any stretch of the imagination.

VM: In terms of the larger gay movement, given that courage and that fear, is there not recognition that our needs, as Black lesbian and gay folks are, perhaps, intrinsically different from the larger gay movement?

PW: I don't know if our needs are intrinsically different from the larger gay movement or the larger Black movement, for that matter. I think that certainly, as Black lesbians and gay men, we have some needs that are unique because of the unique position that we hold in this apex of identity. But, I think that at the end of the day when I have conversations with my straight Black brother about his wishes about life, his dreams, and his aspirations or have discussion with any number of my White gay or lesbian friends, what I discover is that our dreams and our aspirations are very, very similar. I discover that each of us have unique barriers in front of us in the attainment of those dreams and aspirations, but the dreams and aspirations are our common ground. Dreams and aspirations are our common ground for most of us.

VM: Can those barriers be unilateral in terms of race and group? Can there exist barriers for Black lesbian and gay men which don't exist for Black heterosexual men and women?

PW: Certainly. And those things are mostly rooted in the combination of oppression that we face and the historical perspective of where community is. What I mean by that is to deal with racism is one thing or to deal with homophobia is one thing, but to deal with racism, homophobia, and, if you're a lesbian, sexism, all at the same is an entirely different matter. You're not really afforded the opportunity to deal with these things in a serial manner, where you have the one, then the next, and then the third. You're forced to deal with things in parallels, you have to juggle them all at the same time and that does increase the burden. The second problem is really a matter of historical manifestation and that is that the Black lesbian and gay community has not developed the kind of infrastructure that the larger Black community has developed or that the larger gay and lesbian community has developed. That's one of the things that the Black gays and lesbians have to make a commitment to do. We have to build an autonomous Black gay and lesbian infrastructure or community of institutions that are by, about and for us because it is those institutions that then come to the table to negotiate with institutions created by other communities to create the type of collaborative efforts that are going to be necessary for our survival.

VM: Again, back to the need to come home, back to embracing who we are and not being in the closet.

VM: It goes back to what we sacrifice by not being visible, by not claiming ourselves.

PW: Exactly. And it is certainly possible that my experience is unique, but I think not. I certainly don't think that I've made any sacrifices by being visible. I don't think that being clear about who I am has ever affected me in a negative way. It has only affected me in a positive way.

VM: How would you approach that brother or sister who is a school teacher? Who simply cannot afford to be visible?

PW: I am not one of those people who subscribes to some principle that every single person has to come out. That's not what I'm fighting for; what I'm fighting for is for everyone to have that choice to come out.

What I would say to that person is, quite frankly well, Audre Lorde said it, and I certainly don't venture to be anywhere near as smart, articulate or as gifted as Audre Lorde was, but when Audre Lorde said in Litany for Survival, 'When we speak we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcome. But when we are silent we are still afraid.' The point is that we stay in the closet or invisible because we are afraid and what we discover is that even when we're invisible we're still afraid, so we might as well be visible because the invisibility does not remove the fear. The invisibility will not protect us in anyway in terms of job security or freedom from rejection because even when we are invisible we are vulnerable to those things. Finally, if we're going to do a reality check, most people know anyway. I can't tell you the endless number of times when I've had Black gay men or lesbians finally come out to their parents, family or friends and the response has been, 'What are you talking about, we knew this all along.' That's the most common response that happens. You know you're fortyfive years old and you've had a male roommate for twenty years. I mean give me a break.

VM: There seems to be a lot of identification of this 'lost' generation in the African-American community. A lot of attention is focused on one out of every four Black men does this, as opposed to three out of every four Black men are doing this. Is there a deficit of youth leadership in the African-American community and in the African-American gay community?

PW: Is there a deficit? Is there a shortage of potential?

VM: Yes.

PW: Absolutely not. There's a myth of scarcity that we have to fight against. There's no shortage of potential and there's no shortage of opportunities. There is certainly a shortage of folks who have discovered how to access the opportunities that are there and how to overcome the barriers that are before us, but there certainly is not a deficit of talent, intelligence or potential.

VM: How do we widen the access to those opportunities? More skills building conferences? More grass roots efforts to reach a broader range of people?

PW: I have to be honest and say that I have no idea how to do that. I certainly don't believe that I've found the magic to that and I haven't spoken to anyone who has engendered in me the confidence to say that they've found the answer. But, what I do know is that any and all of us who are interested in this work need to commit to trying to finance it. Quite frankly, it just may mean getting to a critical mass of folks who've decided that I'm Black, I'm gay or lesbian and, quite frankly, I deserve all that this world has to offer and I deserve to be able to live my life to its fullest potential. What will happen once we reach a critical mass of us who truly believe that, that example, I think, will cause a revolution.

VM: As a person living with HIV disease, what have been some of your sustaining forces?

PW: Some of my major sustaining forces have been understanding the power and the potential of our people and an understanding that we will get there wherever that 'there' of liberation is. We're going to get there I don't have a doubt in my mind. Because of my particular illness, I'm under no delusions that it's going in a timeframe that's convenient to me, but we're going to get there. And I will continue to try to do whatever I can do, with my limited skill set, to move that process as far and as fast as I possibly can.

VM: How is your health?

PW: My health is fine, actually. I'm just hanging in there.

VM: Good. We thank you much for the interview and for your example.

Douglas E. Jones is a novelist from Brooklyn, N.Y. and news editor for this magazine.

PHILL WILSON
RECEPTION
HONARY CHAIR FOR ATLANTA LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 1995
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COMMUNITY CALENDER

JAN. 5, 1995 • Reading, Doug Jones and S.F. Mahee Charis Books - 7:30 p.m.

Jan. 15, 1995 • Reception, Phill Wilson
Call Pride line 662-4533

• Sisters of 30 Something Special
MLK Birthdy Tribute - 997-6240

Jan. 16, 1995 • M.L.King Parade
Grand Marshall Phill Wilson

Jan. 22, 1995 • Pride Volunteer Kick Off
Call Pride Line 662-4533

EAT RIGHT! LOOK GREAT!

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D.

It is a good time to start thinking about sound nutrition. Sound nutrition is even more important for people with a history of obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and negative body image that results in depression and or low-self esteem. Moreover, good nutrition is important because a healthy diet can help keep up your strength, prevent body tissues from breaking down, and rebuilding tissues that are damaged daily. When you are unable to eat enough food or the right kind of food, your body uses stored nutrients as a source of energy. As a result, your natural defenses are weaker and your body can not fight infection as well. Eating the right foods naturally contributes to weight control.

Weight control can be achieved when an individualized program is implemented and maintained. Proper caloric consumption, coupled with exercise and stress management can improve self-esteem, lower cholesterol, increase energy level, improve sleep patterns, lose or maintain weight and reduce risk of major chronic diseases. Learning good eating habits and establishing an effective exercise program can derive these benefits. For example, consider eating foods lower in fats. Use 1 percent fat milk and low-fat cheeses in many recipes requiring dairy products. Use oils that have less saturated fatty acid(i.e., canola, safflower, soybean, corn and olive).

Fish, chicken, ground turkey without skin are good alternatives to beef and pork. Bake, braise, broil, roast and saute meats because these methods require little extra fat and tend to remove fat contained in the meats. As you prepare your food, try to avoid excessive use of salt or seasoning products that contain salt. An alternative would be to not use salt or use spices/herbs that enhance natural flavors in food.

Should you dine out, avoid foods with heavy sauces, gravies, and salad dressing that cover dishes hidden with fats. Ask questions about how your food is prepared and make requests that will reduce consumption of unnecessary calories and fat.

Asking questions and making requests about your food preparation is an indication that you are in charge of your health.

Without question, most people can not obtain their nutrition and fitness goals by simply being conscious about what they eat. The American Heart Association suggests you exercise 30 to 60 minutes three times a week. If you have not maintained a personal exercise program, you may want to get a physical checkup before you start working out. Should you get the "okay" from your physician, always exercise within your capablities. A solid workout program will include warm up for at least five minutes before, and cool down for five minutes after each 30 to 60 minute workout. For beginners, gradually increase your time as fitness level improves.

Aerobic, continuous exercise for 30 to 60 minutes between warm-up and cool down will generate several benefits. Examples of aerobic exercise include stair climbing, cross-country sking, jogging, swimming, walking, biking, step aerobic, and slide aerobics. These kinds of exercises work large muscle groups and help you get in shape by raising blood flow for an extended time.

Again, make these changes gradually over time. Find friends and love ones that will support your new lifestyle. Be gentle with yourself as you reprogram yourself to institute new life-enchancing changes that will improve the quality of your life. Incorporating these tips gradually into your daily routine will allow you to obtain a fitter, stronger, leaner, and healthier body and mind.

Next Month: Aids and the African American Woman

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph. D. is a health and behavior scientist.

Venus™
MAGAZINE

January 1995
Vo. 1 No. 1

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Thanks For Your
LEAP of FAITH!!

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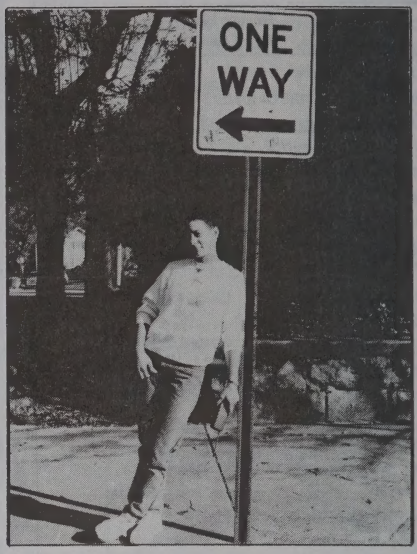
What's Going On in Your Life?

What's going on in your life is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals....

So tell us— What's going on in your life.



Dear Geanie,

I'm a 40 year old professional female and I'm thinking about coming out to my boss. I think that she suspects that I'm a Lesbian but I'm not sure how she'll react. I always bring a male escort to our company functions. It really sickens me to see all my co-workers with their spouses, knowing that my lover and I would not be well received in this setting. I'm so tired of the double life, but I can't quit this job. What should I do?

Over it!

Dear Over it,

I must first begin by saying that it is important and psychologically healthy to claim oneself and identity as a lesbian. Of course, it follows that to claim one's love and relationship is equally healthy and affirming. And, I must commend your healthy need for both.

And though it is important and self-esteem building to "out" oneself, be sure that you have considered the following and have assured yourself that you are ready to handle the wonderful benefits as well as the consequences of same.

Once considered, your path for action will open before you.

What is the texture of the environment in which you live and work? In other words, is it more conservative or more liberal. This will provide you with a feeling of whether it is tolerate or punitive to who you are.

Though there are certainly legal remedies for injustice to human rights, are you emotionally equipped to handle that thrust should it occur? Please be aware that all punitive action is not overt.

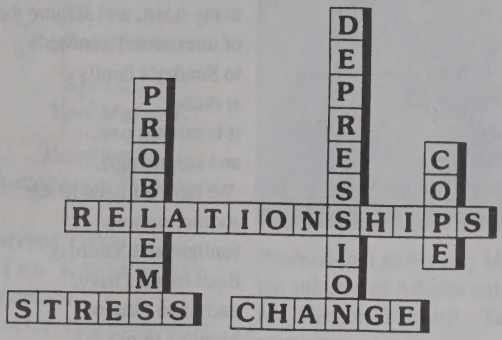
I am not quite clear on how you have surmised that your boss suspects. However, let me just say that if this is so then you are, in fact, able to estimate her reaction to a certain degree. If she suspects, what is her present reaction? Clues are available. Most importantly, be sure that you have clearly examined your own "homophobia" and are confident, comfortable and clear with yourself as a lesbian before you embark on any course of action. This may be a time when your strength and courage of self may be called upon to help others in their struggle with "homophobia".

The question you ask is very difficult and I empathize with your dilemma. However, "outing" at any level is a very personal dilemma and decision which each individual must respond to alone.

There is no blanket answer.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. If you' d like to let us know 'what's going on in your life' address your letters to: **Venus Magazine, PO. BOX 89238, ATLANTA, GA 30312 or Fax (404) 622-8089**

When Life Becomes A Puzzle...



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Father in Flux, Family Fascism and Other Fictitious Sources of Me

P. B. Luciene

There's no clouds in the sky and
no family's called to say there's
someone else we won't be seeing until
Judgement Day, and still
Momma's got her head in one hand,
Phone in the other, tears are falling
like drivebys in South Central;
unexpected, unwelcomed.
Momma's telling her sister,
(asking the world,
pleading with God
calling on angels
cursing devils who took
too much notice in her own)
what could she have done wrong;
too much love, too much work
too much time with her,
too little time with
no father

And outside the sun's happy
that its face isn't covered
with clouds and tears.

Inside, my house is a carefulness,
the way my mother walks by
and the dog's ears prick up
only when doors open to let another
cousin, Aunt, Uncle,
sister, brother, niece,
father
into the wake of my youth,
and each walks around my space,
dodges my gaze and
fills the halls outside my door
with whispers and
shaking heads,
fearing the power I now have,
thinking that I'll once again
speak the words that are
my life-shout, my unchanged truth
to my heart, and assume the unlife
of unexpected gunfire
to Sunday's family
at dinner.
It is months past,
and surprisingly,
We have all lived to see
another summer,
sunlight and Saturday.
Each friend I have,
each man I know,
Momma thinks is
where I am,
when I am,
how I am,
but more importantly she knows
they have not
lost their smiles,
changed their walks,
lost their right to be
black, male, alive or
failed to help her understand
who you hold and who you love
is not what makes a man.
That is the doctrine she gives,
she delivers from her pulpit
to Aunts that wonder
on their phones
under the roofs
they share with sons
which also lack fathers,
have holes in their heritages,
across the miles of family,
and each ponders the
possibility of loving
a boy who overnight became
a man in a different
kind of
way.

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

NAME:
Taisha Khan

AGE:
36

STYLIST:
Regina Simms

STATUS:
Very Married

HOMETOWN:
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Current Titles:
Miss Knoxville, Tennessee
Miss Georgia Continental
Miss Black USA 1st R.U.

Former Titles
Miss Peachtree State
Miss Black Atlanta
Miss Metro Georgia

Professional perfomer, Ms. Taisha Kahn resides in the suburbs of Atlanta with her husband of 10 years Mr. Gregory Richard. Taisha constantly tours the southern eastern states with her electrifying performances and never fails to highlite Aids Awareness in each show. Ms. Kahn has been known to donate her entire winnings to charitable causes. At the beginning of each show, Taisha usually dedicates her performances to the memory of her greatest fan and mentor; her mother, Mrs. May Frances Fleming.

Jena P. Jones
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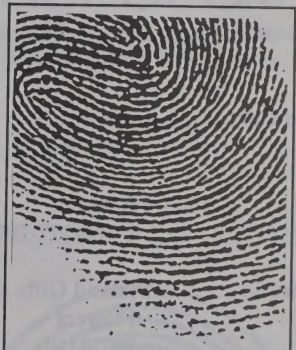

WARREN FLETCHER
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The 411
ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	109 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B/House Show
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
PEARL GARDEN	107 Luckie (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50%	Top 40 R&B, Show
THE OTHERSIDE	1924 Piedmont	Wed.	Women 50% Men 50%	House R&B, Show

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OUT ON CAMPUS

SPELL IT OUT!

The Spelman College Lesbian Bisexual Alliance has been on the campus of this historically black institution as an underground organization in some form of another for at least two decades. We became and officially Chartered organization last year in the fall of 1993. A freshman at the time, Kendra we only know her first name), spoke to Dr. Johnnetta Cole about the need for a chartered lesbian/ bisexual group on campus. Dr. Cole agreed that this was important, and agreed to help with the process. The year after Kendra's senior year a group was chartered. Karen Napper, Tamera Haywood, Antonia Randolph, and Wendi O'Neal along with five other anonymous students made up the group for it's first year as the visible Lesbian/ Bisexual Alliance.

This year we have a group of five people who work consistently with the Alliance. We have sponsored several forums on homphobia in the black community, had safer sex parties thanks to the women of Sisterlove, a black womens' Aids project in Atlanta, and participated in tributes to the life and work of Audre Lorde on campus with Zam (an Atlanta based African -American lesbian support group.) We have walked in the Aids Walk Atlanta, co-sponsored a forum on breast cancer with students from the Southern Organizing Committee, an undoing homophobia workshop at a young women's health conference, and had an annual National Coming Out Day Celebration. What we have been most evolved with this year has been a month long, four part series of discussions on spiritually in the queer community. The end of the series was a lecture from out black bisexual scholar/activist, and professor in the school of divinity at Howard University, Dr. Elias Farajaje-Jones.

In the upcoming Spring semester we plan to sponsor reading groups, and "Queer week", a week long celebration of being queer and out-proud. We meet every Thursday, at 7:30 in the Absolm Jones Chapel of Fair St. in Atlanta University Center. Please call (404) 525-8639 or write us at 710 Peachtree St. apt. 126 Atlanta, Georgia 30308 to contact Wendi O'Neal or Antonia Randolph (co-chairs).

If you or an organization on your campus is African American Gay/Lesbian or Bisexual and would like to be featured in this monthly column please contact the Venus office at (404) 622-8069.

FOOD

NOT BY BREAD ALONE

Lois A. Grant, B.S.

DR. KING'S , : FAVORITE MEAL

Those of us who grew up in the south, like Martin, Jr., may remember being in church all day on Sunday and several times during the week. As I recall, on Sundays when the pastor was invited over for dinner the main attraction was fried chicken. I suppose that's where Martin, Jr., got his love of fried chicken.

From this very simplistic background arose not an extraordinary man but an ordinary man doing extraordinary things. His favorite meal was one that most of us have eaten at least once.

FRIED CHICKEN

Yield: 6 servings
2 1/2 pound chicken (fryer), cut up
1 cup flour
1 tablespoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
Butter or margarine Shortening

Wash and drain the chicken. while chicken is draining, mix the flour, salt, and pepper in a large bag. Drop the chicken pieces in the bag with the flour mixture and shake until all the pieces are thoroughly coated.

Place margarine or butter, and shortening in a large heavy skillet using a mixture of half margarine or butter and half shortening. when this mixture is melted it should be at a depth of at least 1 inch. Heat to a temperature of 350 degree F on a deep fat thermometer or until a bread cube browns in 60 seconds. Shake any excess flour off each piece of chicken before adding it to the hot fat mixture. To avoid getting a possible burn use tongs to place the chicken in the hot fat. Make sure that you do not crowd the chicken in the skillet. put a few pieces in at one time or use two frying pans so that the chicken fries evenly. Cook on both sides about 15 minutes or until chicken is golden brown on both sides. Remove chicken from the pan and drain on plate or sheet pan lined with paper towels. Remove from paper towels and place on serving platter when well drained.

Use safety precautions when frying chicken by making sure that you use tongs when you turn the chicken or remove it from the skillet. Do not over fill the skillet or it could spill over and start a fire. Make sure you lower the flame to medium or medium high when frying the chicken to avoid burning the chicken or yourself.

APPLE PIE

6 apples
1 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon grownd mace
1 teaspoon ground mace
1 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons flour
1 recipe Plain Pastry (can substitute 2 ready made pie crusts).

Peel and slice apples. Sift dry ingredients together and mix with apples. Line pie pan with pastry, fill with apple mixture, dot with butter and cover with top crust. Bake in very hot oven (450 degree F) 15 minutes: reduce temperature to moderate (350 degree F) and bake 45 minutes longer. Makes 1 (9-inch) pie. Be well and enjoy life to the fullest. Happy eating!

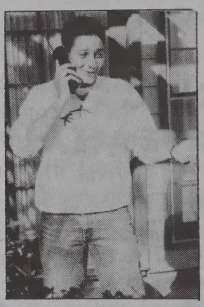
Next Month: Heart Healthy Foods/Loving Yourself and Significant Other.

Lois A. Grant, B.S., Foodservice Management, taught Catering/Culinary Management and is owner of Grant Foodservice Unlimited

ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info.! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

MEN



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- **Out Reach, Inc. (404) 346-3922 or 1-800-441-2437**
- **Home Free Ministry (404) 818-2033 P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Georgia 30301**

CAMPUS

- **Spelman College Lesbian Bisexual Alliance 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Georgia 30308 (404) 524-8639**

TRAVEL TIP OF THE MONTH

by David Washington
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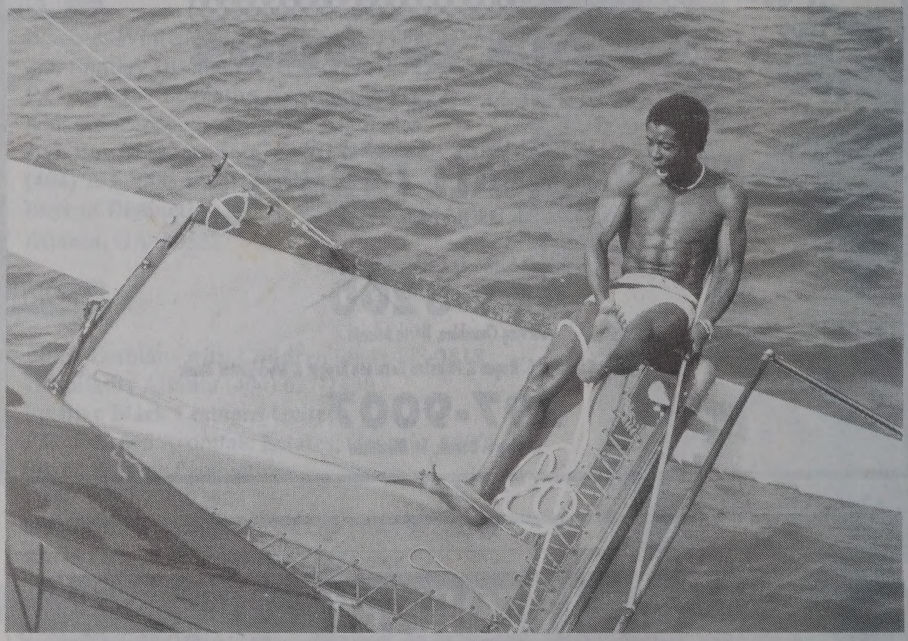

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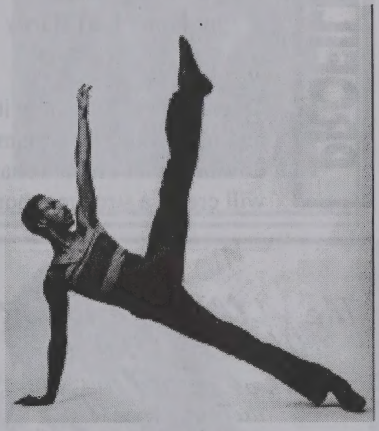

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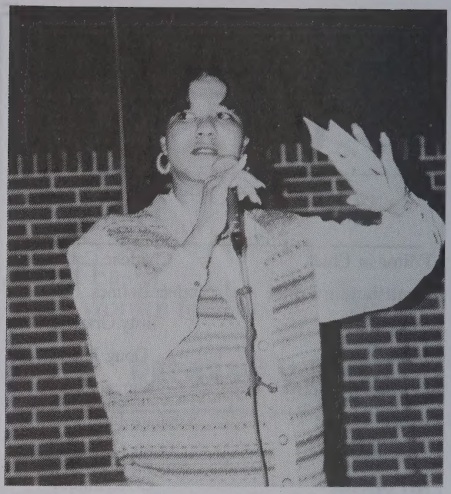

Traci came to Atlanta with a vision to provide a social, entertaining, and networking environment for the women of our community. She now heads the Atlanta chapter of Sisters of 30 Something Special. " We will create a stronger, more connected and unified sisterhood."

The Atlanta Feminist Womens Chorus
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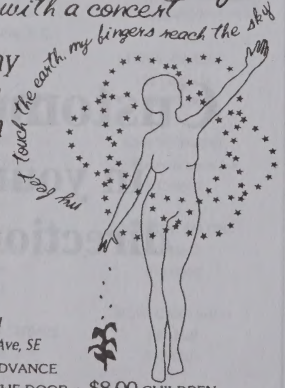

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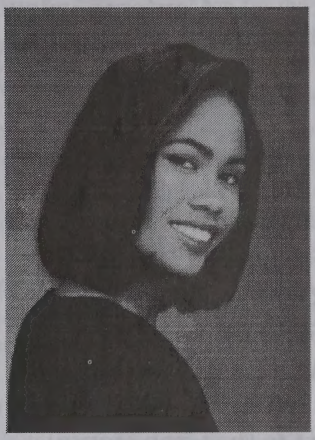

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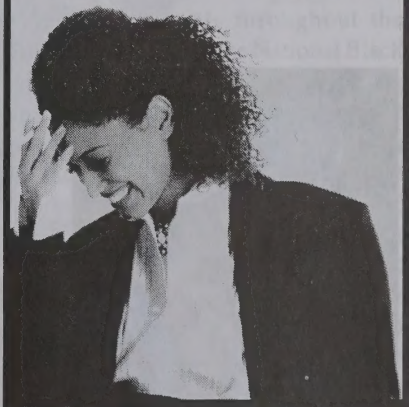

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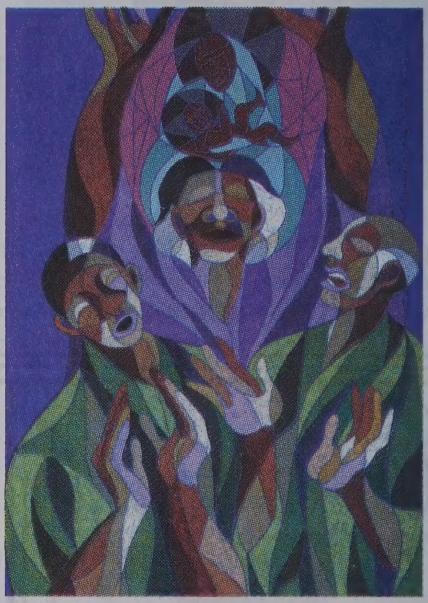

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ARTS

AFRIKINETIC

THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA!

AFRIKINETIC, the dancer's diaspora where movement, percussion and interpretation are reunited will debut in Atlanta, February 5,1995. It is an originally copyrighted term which describes this new approach to Afrikan dance. AFRI-(from the word afrika) and KINETIC-(meaning movement). Thus, AFRIKINETIC—The movement of Afrika.

Afrikan dance has a cultural function designed to support and preserve values of the community. The practice of the dance is sacred since it is engaging in an ancestral continuum based upon vital components of an Afrikan reality.

This technique emphasizes the relationship between dance, drum, tradition and spirit AFRIKINETIC seeks to elevate Afrikan dance by showing the special relationship between the dancer's movement, drummer's rhythm, ancestral mission (tradition) for performing the dance and the indigenous life force (spirit) which Permeates this collective experience.

With an emphasis upon folkloric tradition, AFRIKINETIC will bridge the void between movement and interpretation. This multi-faceted approach allows the dancer to realize the uniqueness of the movement as one of tribal/familial customs. Therefore, this approach deepens and strengthens one's understanding of the dance. It is the specific movement of a particular people focused together for a certain reason for the good of the community. It is ritual dance movement.

The instructor, Waleed Elkan has been performing Afrikan dance for sixteen years in addition to supplementing his work via independent studies of Afrikan culture, folklore and religion. He is a graduate of Emerson College and began his Afrikan Dance studies with DeAlma Battle with The Art of Black Dance and Music in Boston.

Upon relocating to Atlanta, he performed with the Afrikan Dance Ensemble studying directly under Teteh Adagho, the 1991 Bronze Jubilee Recipient for Dance, He has performed in numerous festivals throughout the Southeast, including the National Black Arts Festival, Piedmont Arts Festival, and the International Dance Festival. He has also spent time in Managua where he taught at the Sandinista Cultural Workers Institute in Nicaragua. Waleed was instrumental in the creation of Adebonajo Afrikan Dance Theatre and the Madieo Afrikan Dance Ensemble here in Atlanta. He has also taught Afrikan Dance at Georgia State University.

AFRIKINETIC
THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA

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Waleed Elkan
Instructor

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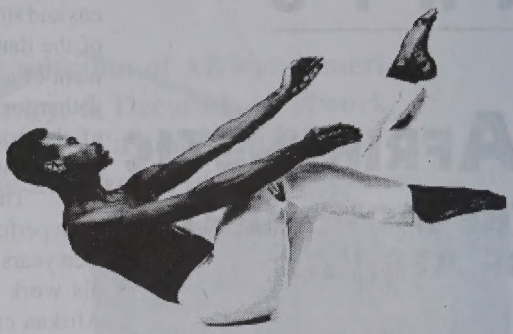
SPIRITUALITY



THE BODY TEMPLE

by Kamau Ifoma

"God made it, God love everything you love - and a mess of stuff you don't But more than anything else, God love admiration...I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it... people think pleasing God is all God care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back."

The wise words of Shug Avery
from "THE COLOR PURPLE"
by Alice Walker

How many times in your life have you heard the scripture which states that your body is the temple of God. It is to be cherished and worshipped and cared for with the same respect and care that you would give to your God.

I can remember as a child wondering if they were really talking about my body. Had they ever even seen my body? A little pudgy here. Uncoordinated there. Pimples a bit of everywhere. And this is the 'temple of God?' What God would want to live in this? (and when those issues of sex and sexuality began to surface), My question transformed to 'why would God want to live in this house of sin?'

My question, spoken loudly (in the silence of my soul), began to beat on me with the vigor and intensity of one 'good ole bashing'. I, who had always held a strong consciousness of loving myself, was now beginning to question the validity of that love. As my question turned into pain and my pain into fear, I began to dislike and neglect the 'temple' in which my God lives. Just as a house, which is neglected, becomes unprotected from the elements of self-hatred, low self-esteem and poor self-body image. With the frame, outer covering and windows of my temple shattered my soul became dis-eased (not-at-ease).

It was around this time that something wonderful happened. I was fresh out of college, working in the mental health profession. I was teaching adolescents how to be mentally healthy; how important it was to love themselves, unconditionally, regardless of what everyone around them may be saying or thinking of them, loving themselves, the whole self, was the only remedy to their healing.

There is an old African proverb that says, "if you are in hiding, don't light

a fire." With each piece of advice that I would give to one of the adolescents, I would also spark another flame within myself. A flame that began to expose the unworthiness that I felt for myself. I became hungry for a means of freeing myself from this temple of doom. I soon became a student of the self-help methods which I was offering to my clients. The methods which simply say; we must love our whole self unconditionally.

It's not enough to want to love yourself. It's not enough to dream of a body image that you could or would love, if you could have it. You must learn to love yourself just as you are.

You must learn to love your 'body temple' just as it is. Loving yourself and your body, right now, gives you permission to begin the process of expressing the love you've got inside and wearing it on the outside. The body is the protector of all that you are within. The body is also the first image of your true inner self that you and others see. When you harbor feelings of being unworthy or unprotected the body breaks down. With nothing to protect or 'show off', the body has little reason to be its best. It has no reason to be a Taj Mahal. It becomes a shack.

As a shack you have no purpose. You are just there. You allow anyone or anything to treat you anyway. You may say to yourself, 'love doesn't live here, so it matters not how you treat me. It's OK to abuse me physically, mentally and emotionally. You're only doing to me, outwardly, what I am doing to myself, inwardly.' As the Taj Mahal you are a 'symbol' of beauty, strength and longevity. No one or nothing can abuse or take advantage of you because you house the ruler of your universe, you! Now you can say, 'I am the love that lives here. I treat myself with respect, trust, patience and joy. You can only be a visitor here if you treat me the same.'

Always remember that you are created by and in the image and likeness of the divine. This makes you Divine. You should worship your temple and its contents 24-7-365! Don't 'piss God off' by not noticing the beauty that you express. Whenever and as often as possible get in the mirror naked and love yourself. Physically and emotionally naked. Allow yourself to be in awe of this creation which is being expressed as you. Look yourself over, completely. Don't miss a spot. And love every bit of it. You will never truly love yourself without loving your body, as well. Be a symbol of beauty, strength and longevity and call it YOU!

LET'S EACH AFFIRM:

MY BODY IS THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OF MY INNER BEAUTY. IT IS MY TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE. IT IS THE TRUE REPRESENTATION OF LOVE!

Kamau Ifoma is a freelance writer and founder of Home Free Ministry.

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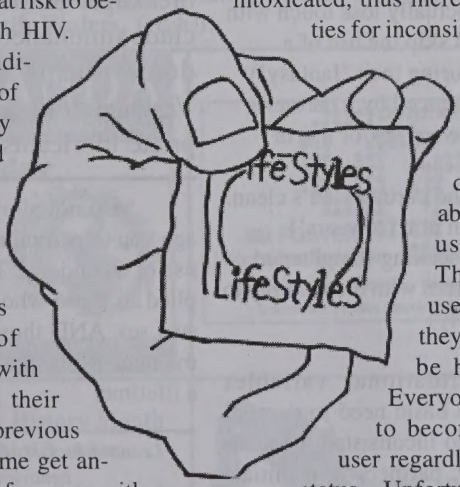
HEALTH

CONDOM USE

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION!

It has been asked why condom use is compromised repeatedly. Why are many individuals on a road leading to self-destruction? Why are many who travel this self-destructive path so determined to take other unwanted passengers with them? What is really going on?

First, most individuals at risk do not perceive they are at risk to becoming infected with HIV. Although studies indicate that knowledge of AIDS is exceptionally high among gay and bisexual African-American men. Many black gay men, however, have negative attitudes about the use of condoms and react with intense anger when their partners ask about previous sexual contacts. Some get angry when a partner refuses sex without a condom. Others may perceive (the use of) comdoms as interference with foreplay and sexual pleasure.



The use of comdoms falls into three basic categories: non-users, sporadic users, and ritualistic users. Non-users are individuals who may be less confident in their ability to discuss condoms or to insist on their use with a sexual partner. Sporadic users are individuals who use condoms inconsistently.

Both non-users and sporadic users are more likely to have multiple sex partners. They may also have sex while intoxicated, thus increasing opportunities for inconsistent or improper use. Ritualistic users are individuals who are able to clearly communicate about the important use of condoms. They insist on its use consistently and they are less likely to be heavy drinkers. Everyone should strive to become a ritualistic user regardless of your HIV status. Unfortunately, for some gay and bisexual men, knowing that their HIV status is negative has been perceived as a 'green light' to continue business as usual — unprotected sex and multiple partner.

Among African-American gay

and bisexual men, some reasons for NOT using a condom may include:

1) Being in a steady relationship ('we've been together 2 years')
2) Being unprepared ('it just happened')
3) Being irresponsible ('couldn't be bothered')
4) Using alcohol and/or other drugs while having sex.
5) Being bisexual (a bisexual man may not perceive his level of risk as being that of a homosexual, when in actuality a bisexual man offers 'double jeopardy' by possi bly infecting or being infected by individuals on both sides of the fence.)
6) Perceiving the sexual partner as extremely attractive (some black gay & bisexual men get so caught up in their partner's good looks that they actually lose touch with reality and skip the use of a condom during their 'fantasy')
7) Being influenced by a partner's attitude toward sex/or use of condoms.
8) Knowing the partner ('he's clean. I've known him for years')
9) Sensation seeking (heightened arousal comes with the inability to think clearly)

These situational variables coupled with the basic need to demonstrate trust lead to inconsistent condom use. Commonly, partners who initiate condom use early in a relationship will eventually abandon use with the longevity of the relationship.

Condom norms, or patterns of use, have been established and have been very difficult to change over the past five years. There are still African-American men who feel they have 'messed up once, twice, many times' by not using a condom. This prior sexual history, along with the fear of getting tested and knowing that there IS NO cure for AIDS, has left some African-American gay and bisexual men feeling lost and hopeless. This dilemma may fuel a continued downward spiral to self-destruction as evident by no changes in inappropriate sexual behaviors.

There is absolutely no room for negotiation. Condoms should be used every time any form of sexual intimacy (oral, vaginal and anal sex) is experienced.

It is equally as critical to use the condom correctly, because incorrect use may lead to slipping or breakage. Some improper uses include simultaneous use of two condoms during sex, and use of Vaseline, lotion, or other inappropriate lubricants.

Do not allow anyone to encourage you to participate in sex without the use of a condom. This rule must be applied to those who are engaging in casual sex AND those who would like to maintain a monogamous relationship for a lifetime.

Leonard Jack,Jr., Ph.D. is a health and behavior scientist

Photo by: Ron Singleton

These glowing sisters enjoyed the National Black Bay and Lesbian Summit earlier this year in Los Angeles, including Atlanta's Pat Hussain (2nd from left), and L.A.'s Ruth Waters, (right).

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WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

"What's Going on in Your Life" is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day-to-day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...

So tell us - - What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

I'm a 24 year old male happily engaged to a wonderful young lady who vows to spend the rest of her life with me. However, when I was 16 another male about 2 years older then I took advantage of me. I have to admit I did enjoy it. I kept that our secret. Last week I told my best friend I was engaged. He hugged me and congratulated me. He then shared with me that he's bisexual. I was stunned. Since then he has made many passes and I have found myself wanting him. He doesn't know that I want him as much as he wants me, but I do love my girl.

What I'm asking is should I tell him how I feel about him and take the chance to ruin my relationship or should I just let him continue to come on to me and I play like it's not happening and marry the girl I love?

Confused

Dear Confused,

You have labeled yourself, whether you are clearly aware or not, VERY accurately.

When you were sixteen you were molested by an adult. The issue here is not wether it was pleasurable or not, but that someone took advantage of you. This can confuse your sexual identity, confuse your feelings, and confuse appropriate boundaries, to name a few.

This "secret" has a profound effect on your life ongoing. This needs to be worked through.

It is apparent that you remain sexually attracted to your best friend. Whether this represents bisexual or true homosexual

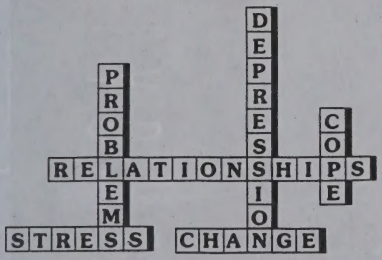
feelings is a matter for exploration in an appropriate setting, namely counseling. Please understand that sexual attraction, had you been attracted to another female, would be somewhat less complicated. This situation would be purely sexual attraction and I would request that you respond to your one-on-one commitment promises to your fiancee'. However, this appears to be more than sexual attraction and may bring into play "Sexual identity" issues. It would be emotionally destructive for the two of you to live an untrue heterosexual existence with your true yearnings completely or partially elsewhere. And, her expectations that ALL of your inner yearnings are with her.

The healthiest course would be to enter counseling and explore "Same sex" yearnings. This would be your premarital task.

Then you and your psychotherapist/counselor could speak to whether or not it would be advisable to act on these feelings. As well as, the necessity to reveal these feelings to your fiancee'.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089

When Life Becomes A Puzzle..



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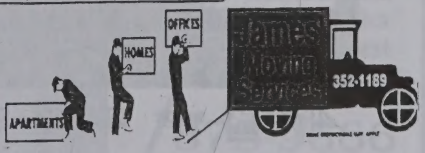

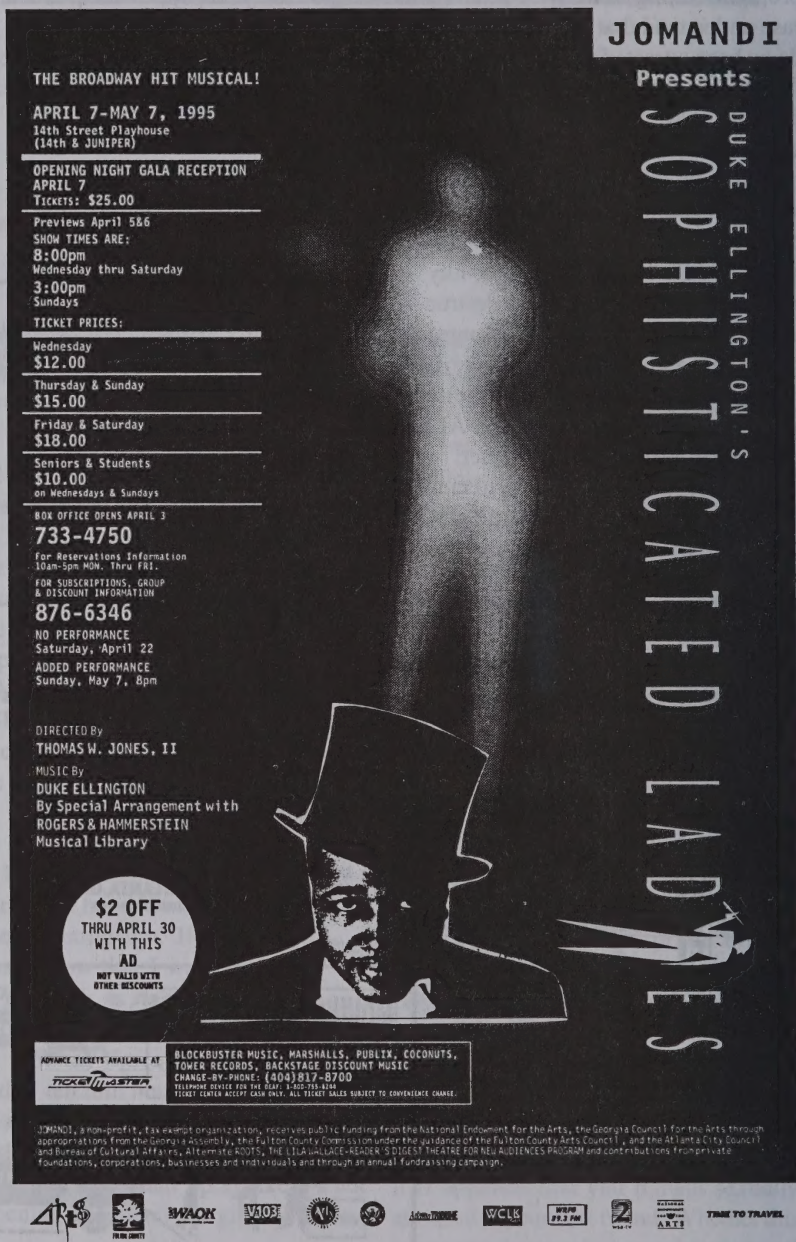
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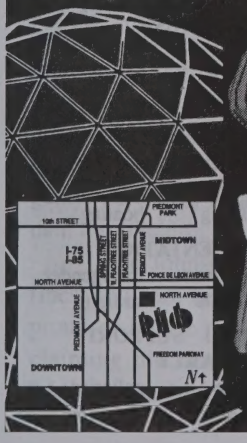

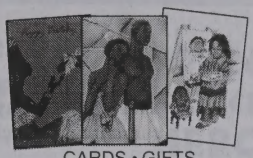

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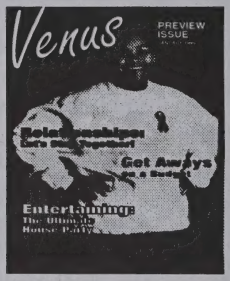

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AGE

18-25	26-35	36-45
46-50	50-65	over 65

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

own your own home
currently renting
live with lover/rmmate
live on campus
live with parent/s

WILL BUY NEW CAR WITHIN

1-3 mo 6 mo 12 mo. 2 yrs.

FAVORITE TYPE RESTAURANTS

seafood	soul food	Chinese
Italian	French	Thai
Mexican	Jamaican	Columbian

WILL VACATION OUTSIDE YOUR CITY WITHIN THE NEXT

1-3mo. 6mo. 12mo.

INDENTIFICATION

black red yellow white

FAVORITE PLACES TO SHOP

malls specialty shops catalog

COMMUNICATIONS GAGETS OWNED

computer	cellular phone
pager	electronic organizer

FAVORITE MUSIC

jazz	hiphop	R&B
reggae	gospel	oldies
classical	country	rock

FAVORITE SPORTS ACTIVITIES

tennis	basketball	softball
swimming	walk/run	bowling
bodybldg	fishing	boating

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

lesbian	gay man	transgender
bi/female	bi/male	straight

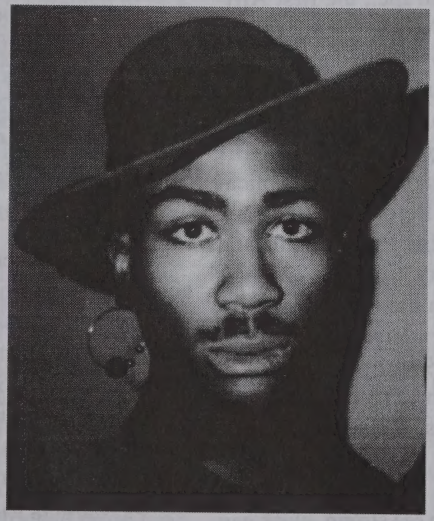
THE ARTS YOU SUPPORT REGULARLY

theater	dance	galleries
musicals	readings	museums

TRE JOHNSON: A GENTLE AND FIERCELY DETERMINED HERO

by Shirlene Holmes

There are a number of ways to describe Leigh Tre Johnson. One could begin with his beautiful catlike eyes or his contagious smile or that delicious southern twist of his dialect, which puts you in the mind of a large plate of macaroni and cheese, collard greens, cord bread, fried chicken and candied yams. One could even begin by telling you about his great talents: his soul stirring singing, his frank honest writing on the black gay experience or his activist's roar. But it seems most appropriate to describe this kind gentle hero as a great spirit with abundant dermination.



Tre Johnson is one of Atlanta's finest southern belles, and is especially proud of it. He thinks nothing of proclaiming his black southern heritage. "Atlanta is black and white, no in betweens," he says. Johnson is not ashamed of the stereotypes folks conjure up when they think southern, black and gay; he is no stereotype. This gentle man feels that the south is his true motherland. It has been the place where he was planted and broke through the soil.

Tre was raised in Georgia, just like the peaches and okra. Fortunately, he has always had a family that supported and loved him. He is the youngest and only son of a blues singing father and devoutly pious Jehovah's Witness mother. Tre says his earliest memories are of hearing music and singing with his dad. He credits his mother with being his anchor and cherishes her compassion and support all through out his life.

Though sheltered by the love of

family, Tre certainly bore the cross growing up in the deep south. He testifies this way: "being a sissy and a lighted skinned black is heavy, but having AIDS is the cherry on top."

Tre Johnson has battled AIDS since 1990, when he was diagnosed at 19 years old. Now at 24, five years later, he has made peace with the disease that has so ravaged his body and changed his life. He shares with confidence, "AIDS came to look for heroes". And Tre is indeed a hero, having endured sickness and having worked hard to see to it that the plights of people living with AIDS as well as black gays and lesbians are heard. He prides himself in having been a spokesperson for Outreach Inc., the first African American AIDS organization founded in the city of Atlanta. He also has been courageous as a writer and performing artist. For awhile now he has been asserting his views as an author. His writings have appeared in such publications as "The Road Before Us / 100 black gay poets" (Galliens Press, 1990) and "Bound by Diversity", an Page 2 anthology of voices from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities (Sebastian Press, 1994).

As a youth, Tre confesses he searched for heroes. He found most of them to be female: the black women in his life as well as those in the history books. He longed to see strong, black gay men to emulate, but there were none. Now he is the one displaying the valor as he fights back against chronic illness and lifts his voice loudly against oppression.

Tre talks freely about AIDS, unflinching, so well aware of the death surrounding him. He is both a three time survivor of pneumonia, as well as, according to Tre, a survivor of the machinations of the medical practitioners. Having AIDS has truly changed Tre's life. He says candidly, "AIDS is a mind disease. You've got to think and make decisions." He is quick to share his impression of his health care treatment:

"Medicine is just like witchcraft —— a practice." He adds, "blacks are not studied nor respected; we have second class status in AIDS care and research. AIDS is a money making thing, the latest craze. We are going to have to start healing ourselves, like we always have had to do."

Johnson believes in the inner power and strength of blacks to overcome. Johnson is not scared of death. He has lost over 200 friends and comrades to AIDS, the closest being his mentor, publisher, poet, performer and activist, Assotto Saint, who passed away in July of 1994.

Johnson credits his openness about AIDS and his sexuality with the fact that he is not ashamed. He adamantly believes that shame keeps black gays vulnerable. "AIDS is a time bomb ticking in our community," Johnson says. He feels the disease is fueled by ignorance, confusion, misinformation and lies. "Our silence is killing us," Johnson says of the black gay community. He believes AIDS has created an urgency now despite the fact that black gays still believe it will not happen to them. Until we conquer that silence, as a black lesbian and gay community, we will be behind. He strongly contends that we must liberate ourselves, have a Harriet Tubman attitude about black lesbian and gay freedom. We must break down stereotypes. It is Tre's

hope that one day, when black lesbians and gays look in the mirror or in each other's eyes, they will no longer be scared of their own reflection. They will not be ashamed to claim who they are.

At his young age, Tre is content, feeling he has done what he has desired with his life. He has no regrets and is very proud of what he has become. Smiling he says he does not want for anything and spends his time doing as he pleases, which for him is truly the meaning of living. In his opinion, most people are not really living. They are merely surviving, caught up in the rat race of working and trying to make ends meet.

Tre celebrates his life and manhood, affirming he never wanted to be a stereotypical gay black man. He takes great pride in his manhood, and feels blessed to possess the heart of a woman, which for him is a special sensitivity to others and the world. Frankly, he abhors the negative image most hold of gay black men and has always strived to set a positive example.

Tre Johnson has numerous accomplishments. He is a proud graduate of Northside School of the Arts. He credits his training at his alma mater in singing, performing and dance as being a factor of his survival. Tre came of age at Northside, finding other black gays to identify with, and also finding his voice as an artist. Tre's poetry and prose have appeared in "Amethyst", "Southern Voice", "The James White Review" and "Eyeball". He has appeared on local and national stages, as well as in theatre abroad: London, France and Brussels. Mostrecently he appeared in several local productions, among them are "Legends Past and Present", "Souls On Fire" and "Warren".

According to Tre, he writes and performs to break the silence. "We must speak now or forever be silenced," he says.

Johnson is very afraid for the black gay literary community because most of its pioneers are dead, dying or presently disabled and, thus, unable to take the reins. He feels there is a need for leadership. Leaders must emerge that are not afraid nor ashamed. They must be fair, outspoken and tough.

Tre is pleased that Venus magazine now exists, feeling it is a vehicle to educate our community. He admonishes, "we need our own. We cannot expect the white lesbian and gay community to liberate us."

Tre says with an assured calm that he knows his ultimate silence is coming. He has no regrets and is willing to pay the price. Tre says, "I'm paying for speaking up with my heels up." He continues with the utmost frankness, "I won't live to see the cure." He says people with AIDS should be treated as royalty and accorded dignity and respect. And even further, they should be made comfortable in their last days. Tre says it took him a many years to fight, but he will no longer be terrorized because of his race, sexuality or disease. He says with no apologies, "I'm wearing all of my titles: PWA, gay, black, southern and man".

Certainly, this singer, writer, performer and activist proves that gentleness is not weakness. We celebrate Leigh Tre Johnson, a true hero.

EDUCATION

BROTHERS BACK 2 BACK

Brothers Back 2 back, Inc. is an Atlanta based network, supporting the ever-present needs of the HIV-positive African-American male. Brother Back 2 Back was established in February 1993, after seeing a vast increase of African-American males testing positive for HIV disease and needing support.

Our mission is to provide practical, emotional and brotherly support primarily for African American males that are infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. provides a safe and comfortable environment for men that are living with HIV and AIDS to come and explore their feelings and to develop life maintenance plans. Through support, members are encouraged to lead healthy and active lives, knowing they are not alone and knowing they are supported and loved.

In the years to come, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. hopes to extend its arms of support and education beyond Atlanta and into other cities that might need our services. Regardless of age, sexual preference or risk factor, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is open and we always welcome new members to come and experience the bond of love that exists among us.

At present, we are growing rapidly and instituting many programs for newly infected and affected members. We are attempting to become a full service organization to fulfill all the needs of our members.

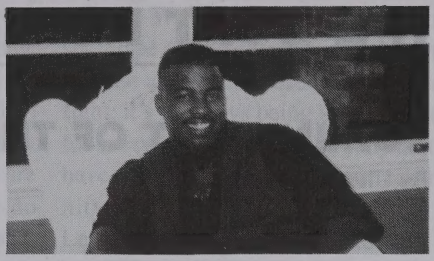
In Atlanta, there are many African-American males infected and affected; some in denial and some who are not. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is attempting to reach these brothers and tell them that HIV/AIDS does not have to mean a death sentence. It simply means that you must restructure your life. At the same time we offer support, a forum for you to speak out, resources and education for you to tap and take advantage of.

This disease knows no boundaries. It crosses all economic and social lines. No one should have to deal with AIDS alone. If you feel we can help, call us. You can reach us at (404) 593-5805. We meet each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30310.

Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is not trying to be all things to all people, but we do know about support and how it is desperately needed in our community.

PROFILE OF A MAN

Name:
Craig Craft
Age:
24
Career:
Massage Therapist
Latest Book:
Wouldn't Take Nothing for my Journey Now - Mayou Angelou
Status:
Single Parent
Hometown:
Dallas, texas



Craig enjoys horseback riding, biking, canoeing, helping others, and a activities with his son. "When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us. Stop. Be still. Pay attention. While we're trying to figure it out, He has already worked it out!"

AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO ALL AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOSTER MORE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THOSE INFECTED AND AFFECTED!

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AID Atlanta

For more information, call Craig Washington at (404) 872-0600

RELATIONSHIPS

COMING OUT OF THE SECOND CLOSET

By Ulester V. Douglas

As John was telling about the emotional and physical abuse James inflicted in him, one is reminded of a scene from James Earl Hardy's B-Boy Blues. In this scene, Raheim punched Mitchell in the face, sending him soaring over the coffee table. After Mitchell regained consciousness, he reflected on what had just happened:

"I've seen many an episode of Donahue with battered women and I always believed they were stupid: how, just how could they get themselves into such a situation? They had to see some sign before they got involved with him, before they got married. One day they wake up and he just comes out swinging? But I could identify with the helplessness and broken trust, now that I was in their position— or was I? Does it take just one hit? I was trying to make sense of it all and found myself doing exactly the same thing that many of those women did: rationalizing, in a way excusing the man's behavior... Raheim was under a lot of stress. He witnessed the death of his best friend. I had to share some of the blame; I provoked him. If I had just kept my mouth shut...I should have known he would react like that..."

Although this is fiction, Mitchell's rationalization and self-blame lasted only a few minutes. Mitchell was able to recognize in a relatively short time that he was not to blame for Raheim's violent behavior, that he did not provoke him and that nothing justified being abused. Also, Mitchell had supportive friends who affirmed that Raheim was responsible for his own actions regardless of the circumstances.

This is not the case for John and thousands of other gay men who are being battered by their partners. Most victims believe that they are to blame for their partner's abusive actions; that they provoked him and deserve to be abused. This is because the batterer is extremely skilled at making the victim feel that way.

One of his manipulative tactics is to isolate the victim from friends and family.

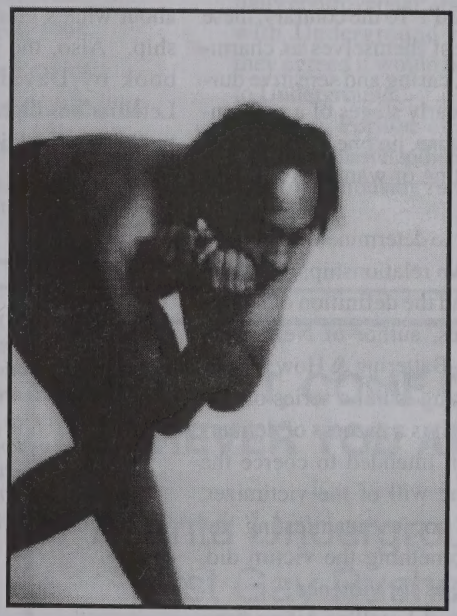
The batterer convinces the victim that friends and family are no good and are a threat to their relationship. In doing this, the batterer ensures that there is hardly anyone the victim can trust and talk to about what's going on.

There is no one to do a reality check; no one to say that it is wrong; that the name calling, hitting, and threatening are all so

wrong; no one to say that forcing the victim to have sex because of how much he loves the batterer is really about the batterer's need for power and control.

Isolation contributes to a very low disclosure rate. Most gay men who are abuse by their partner or ex-partner do not disclose that they are being abused. They calculate that it is safer to stay in this 'second closet' and that the incentives for coming out are few to none.

There is hardly anything in the literature or media that validates the existence of gay male victims. Like Mitchell, when they look at the talk shows, they only see and hear about 'stupid women' who stay in these relationships; 'stupid women' who should have seen it coming. Where are the men? Where are the men who have to constantly walk on eggshells and do not feel comfortable in their own home? Where are the men who are forced to have unprotected sex with partners who sleep around? Where are the men who live in fear that the next time they may be dead?



Sadly, the message sent is that men are not victims, only perpetrators- Certainly not black men. This myth is perpetuated in the gay community. We do not hold batterers accountable for their actions. We buy into the myths that men should be able to defend themselves; that it's just a lovers' quarrel; that it's just a fight; it's just boys being boys. We look for every possible excuse to deny that we have a serious problem in our community, but, David Island and Patrick Letellier, authors of Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them, estimate that their are 500,000 victims of gay battering each year, with a number of these resulting in death.

In addition to denying and minimizing the severity of this problem, we say that it is not in our best interest to air our dirty laundry to a homophobic, racist and sexist community. This is especially true if dealing with law enforcement agencies. There is little or nothing in place that encourages a black gay man to report to the police that he is being battered by his partner. Reporting this could mean having to acknowledge that he is gay. He may not be ready to come out and it may not be safe to do so. Also, he risks being laughed at by the police and told to be a man. It is no secret that the law enforcement community has historically been cruel to

black men. Even when we are victims of a crime, we are treated as the perpetrators. Where is a black male victim of battering to go for safety?

Even as we decide whether or not to involve the police, we struggle with recognizing whether or not we are in an abusive relationship. It is difficult for us to accept that the man we fell in love with is now abusing us. It is important to understand that batterers do not walk around with a sign on their forehead that reads 'batterer on board'. To the contrary, these men may present themselves as charming, wonderful, caring and sensitive during dating and early stages of a relationship. And likewise, no one enters a relationship expecting or wanting to be battered.

In order to determine whether you are in an abusive relationship, it is helpful to understand the definition of battering. Ann Jones, author of Next Time She'll Be Dead-Battering & How to Stop It, says, "battering is not a series of isolated blowups. It is a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer. The batterer is not just manifesting 'insecurity' by something the victim did. These are excuses for violence."

Island and Letellier define "gay men's domestic violence" as any unwanted physical, psychological abuse, or material/property destruction inflicted by one man on another. Examples of physical violence include: forced anal, oral, or genital contact; being choked, punched, kicked, pushed, shoved, slapped, grabbed, etc.; being forced to have sex without a condom. Examples of psychological/emotional violence include: being ignored, neglected, isolated, lied to, ridiculed; threatening to kill the victim, self or other; threatening to leave the relationship; threatening to reveal his sexual orientation. Examples of material or property destruction include: destroying clothes, damaging vehicles, breaking furniture, windows and other valuables.

If you have begun to question whether you are in an abusive relationship, the odds are good that you are. Take the risk and talk to someone you trust about what's going on in your relationship. Also, the previously mentioned book by David Island and Patrick Letellier's is highly recommended. Actually, this book is an excellent resource for anyone who wishes to learn more about gay battering.

If you or someone you know is being abused, there is a support group, call (404) 325-2484 for more information. Dr. Gus Kaufman and Ulester Douglas are currently forming a class in the Atlanta area for gay/bisexual men who use physical and/or psychological abuse, or property destruction against another man, please call (404) 320-0090 for more information.

404 455-0835

Ulester V. Douglas, LMSW
Therapy - Individual, Couples, Family

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Atlanta, GA 30340

PROFILE OF A BUSINESS

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After living in Atlanta for several years, we noticed that there were very few places to buy gay paraphernalia, and none in a mall setting. After two years of research, we decided to open a pushcart in Underground Atlanta. Our proposal was denied initially due to being "potentially controversial", but as we talked with Underground management, they agreed it would be a great asset to Underground.

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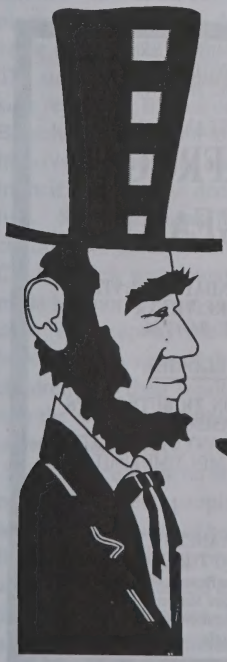

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PROFILE OF A QUEEN

Name:
Ysatis Givenchy
Status:
"Involved"
Age:
23
Last Book Read:
Book of Angels
Hometown:
San Juan, Puerto Rico
Former Titles:
Miss World Queen

Ysatis is from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some of her favorite pastimes include shopping, dancing, listening to good music and watching her favorite horror movies.

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REVIEWS

BOOKS

Blanche Among the Talented Tenth

Author: Barbara Neely
by B.J. Jackson

Are you looking for a book that's easy reading, full of wit and humor, intriguing suspenseful, has a mystery to be solved with an extraordinary African American woman as the central character? You say yes! yes! yes! I say pick up BLANCHE AMONG THE TALENTED TENTH.

Blanche White, a dark skinned domestic worker is the central character in this piece of fiction which deals with class and color divisions among African Americans. The story takes place in Maine, at an exclusive resort for Blacks called Amber Cove. Blanche has managed to enroll her children in private school and also notices a change in their attitudes she doesn't like. She accepts an invitation from her children's wealthy friends to visit Amber Cove, which was founded by a man who made his money from skin lightening products. In accepting the invitation, Blanche hopes to get a view of the interaction of her children with their wealthy friends and correct the snotty attitudes her children have started to develop.

Once Blanche arrives the adventure begins. She meets people who look down at her simply because of her dark complexion. Being the feisty, grounded, self-loving woman she is, Blanche has no problem putting them in their place. Blanche also meets a 70 plus year old feminist diva who is a well known author. This diva is the widow of a white man who admires Blanche's wit and spunk. The famous feminist enlist Blanche's help in finding out if the suicide of her godson and fatal accident of the most hated resident of the resort are connected. Blanche is also pursued romantically by a very handsome and suave gentleman. However during the course of her investigation, Blanche discovers the dirty secrets of all the residents of amber Cove including her diva friend and her romantic pursuer.

This is a well written book with an intriguing storyline. It is full of wit and humor and sings the praises of the working class African American woman. Barbara Neely has created a character who is a forty year old domestic worker who has it all together. She introduces us to a feisty black woman with attitude, wit, survival skills and intelligence. This is a book you will not want to put down, a character you will want to meet again and an author you will want to read again, and again and again.

"The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people....The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."

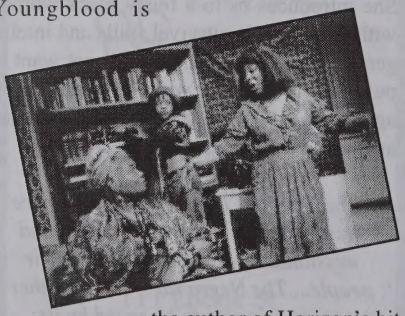
-W.E.B.Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth"

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYS For Your "Must See" List!

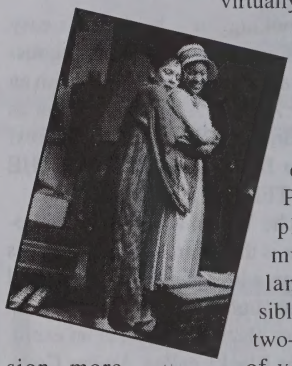
Welcome to Ancestors Books and Breakfast where the menu is... fantastic! Taste our literary and backbone soup. Sip our ink tea and wisdom wine. Sprinkle in some magic and romance, add a dash of comedy, and stir in mystery. Then meet the three generations of African American women who serve up this delicious food for the body and soul in Horizon Theatre Company's Southeastern Premiere of Shay Youngblood's **TALKING BONES**, a 1993 winner of the Lorraine Hansberry Award for Best new Play by an African American writer.

Talking Bones arose from Georgia-born playwright Shay Youngblood's own family experience: "While growing up," she says, "I lived in a house where the elders heard voices. It was understood that these voices were the voices of the ancestors. All of my work tends to be about honoring the ancestors; honoring and listening closely to the inner voice and intuition." In addition to Talking Bones, Shay Youngblood is



the author of Horizon's hit world premiere Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery (both published by Dramatic Publishing Company). It runs from now until April 23rd. For tickets call (404) 584-7450.

According to the Alliance Theater's Kenny Leon, **BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY** will now run through May 14. Leon explains, "For months, BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY has been virtually sold out to our Alliance subscribers and I want to share the excitement of Pearl's new play with as much of Atlanta as possible. With this two-week extension, more of you can hear Pearl's amazing words and witness the unbelievable talents of Phylicia Rashad, Bill Nunn, Gsary Yates, Deidrie Henry and Mark Young."



Cleage's BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY is set amidst Harlem 1930 when "The creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance has given way to the harsher realities of the great Depression."

Best known for her work on "The Cosby Show", Phylicia Rashad is a consummate actress and singer with such Broadway credits as JELLY'S LAST JAM, INTO THE WOODS, DREAMGIRLS, THE WIZ, and AIN'T SUPPOSED TO DIE A NATURAL DEATH.

Tickets to BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY are $20.00 and $26.00 and may be purchased at the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office, or by calling 404-733-5000.

ENTERTAINMENT

JOMANDI'S "Sophisticated Ladies"

Jomandi presents it's high energy production of the Broadway hit musical, "Sophisticated Ladies," featuring the seasoned talents of Chandra Currelley, Sheila Stroud and members of Mistyque as well as newer talents like J. Karen Thomas.

"Sixty people auditioned for this show. I wish I could have hired forty, but we can only have twelve or fourteen, "exclaimed director Tom Jones, when asked how auditions went for the upcoming production. "It's the most awesome audition I've ever seen. Each performer was as good as or better than the other. It was a hard call."

The result is a high-powered combination of singers and dancers that signals a resulting level of performances to the music of jazz master Duke Ellington that will be equal to those of the Broadway production. "We never lack for talent, with our productions," continue Jones, "it's just that we don't have the big bucks for the big staging to go along with the 'big' talent.

"It Don't mean a thing," "I got it bad and that ain't good," "take the A train," "solitude," and of course "sophisticated Lady," are but a sampling of the hits in this sophisticated Broadway hit. With the music of Ellington as the driving force, "Sophisticated Ladies" explores Duke's rise from the cotton club in Harlem to African-American classical music royalty. Last season Jomandi gave Atlanta the definitive "Dreamgirls". Join Jomandi this spring when we make the "sophisticated Ladies" a classic all over again.

Advance tickets available at Ticketmaster: 817-8700. For groups, discounts and information, call 876-6346. Runs April 7-May 7.

Hold on to your tickets! Join **Venus Magazine** Memorial Day Weekend for a salute tot the Black Arts community. Sunday, May 28, 1995 at Odella's. Watch for more info!

IS IT EASIER FOR WOMEN TO HIDE?

By Dream

Consider this: one woman gets dressed to go out into the world. She puts on her stockings, her business dress, the appropriate amount of makeup, in the appropriate colors. She combs her hair back into a suitable style for corporate America. She chooses her one inch heels in black to match her purse. Another woman gets dressed to go out into the very same world. She chooses slacks instead of a dress. She forgoes the wearing of makeup. She wears a fashionable blazer to match her slacks. Her hair is clipped into a short natural. She prefers stylish loafers instead of heels. Given the picture of two women, which would you more likely identify as the lesbian? Given that picture, a lesbian who wants to hide, which woman would you more likely be?

The ability to hide is tangled in the roles that women assume in everyday society. We are able to hide using words that are taken for granted. The word "girlfriend" is a good example. How many times do you hear a conversation that starts with, "I was talking to my girlfriend the other day...", or, "My girlfriend was at my house last night and..."? In a heterosexual context, such phrases are benign and almost never cause a raised brow. If such a phrase is uttered along with a wink and an elbow in the side, then it shades the meaning. And that shade of meaning is what a lesbian can hide behind.

Is it easier for women to hide? Yes. Women are supposed to be the gentler, the more affectionate sex. Holding a girlfriend's hand is okay, as long as it is done in a way that is accepted

in a social setting. Hugging your girlfriend for giving you flowers is okay. Seriously kissing your woman for giving you flowers is a different story. Throw an arm about a girlfriend's shoulder and that's okay, too. It's an act of camaraderie. Without that wink and nudge, having your arms about your woman is acceptable.

In a heterosexist and patriarchal society, a woman has a certain amount of status if she can attach herself to a man. I doubt if Scarlet O'Hara would be so admired if it weren't for Rhett Butler. Could Snow White be held up as a fine example of womanhood if she hadn't gotten the royal kiss from her prince?

Allowing people to think that there may be a man somewhere in her distant future, allows a woman to hang on to some of the status afforded by maintaining a heterosexual facade. How many times, if you are not willing to tell an outright lie, have you just smiled when your mother asked you pointedly if there is a significant MAN in your life? Telling her the truth would rob her of her dreams for a man in your life. Not telling her helps her hold out hope and keeps you well hidden.

So outward appearance keeps a woman hidden. Maintaining that facade of potential for some man, somewhere helps keep a woman hidden. Acting the way everyone expects her to act, keeps a woman hidden. That's all it takes. Some women find this easy.

She can hide in the image of heels instead of loafers. She can maintain that independence is her goal and not a man. She can hide if she can handle explaining the love of her life as only a satisfying friendship instead of a grand passion. It isn't easy for a woman to hide when she comes to the conclusion that she loses more than she gains by hiding. It isn't easy to hide a happiness that helps to complete your life. It isn't easy to hide when you decide that the privilege given because you connect yourself with a man isn't worth the trouble. It isn't easy to hide when you believe it's okay to be who you are.

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'95

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND
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LOS ANGELES AT THE BEACH '95

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SEPT. 1ST - SEPT. 4TH
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The 411
ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

1995 PRIDE MARKET APPLICATIONS

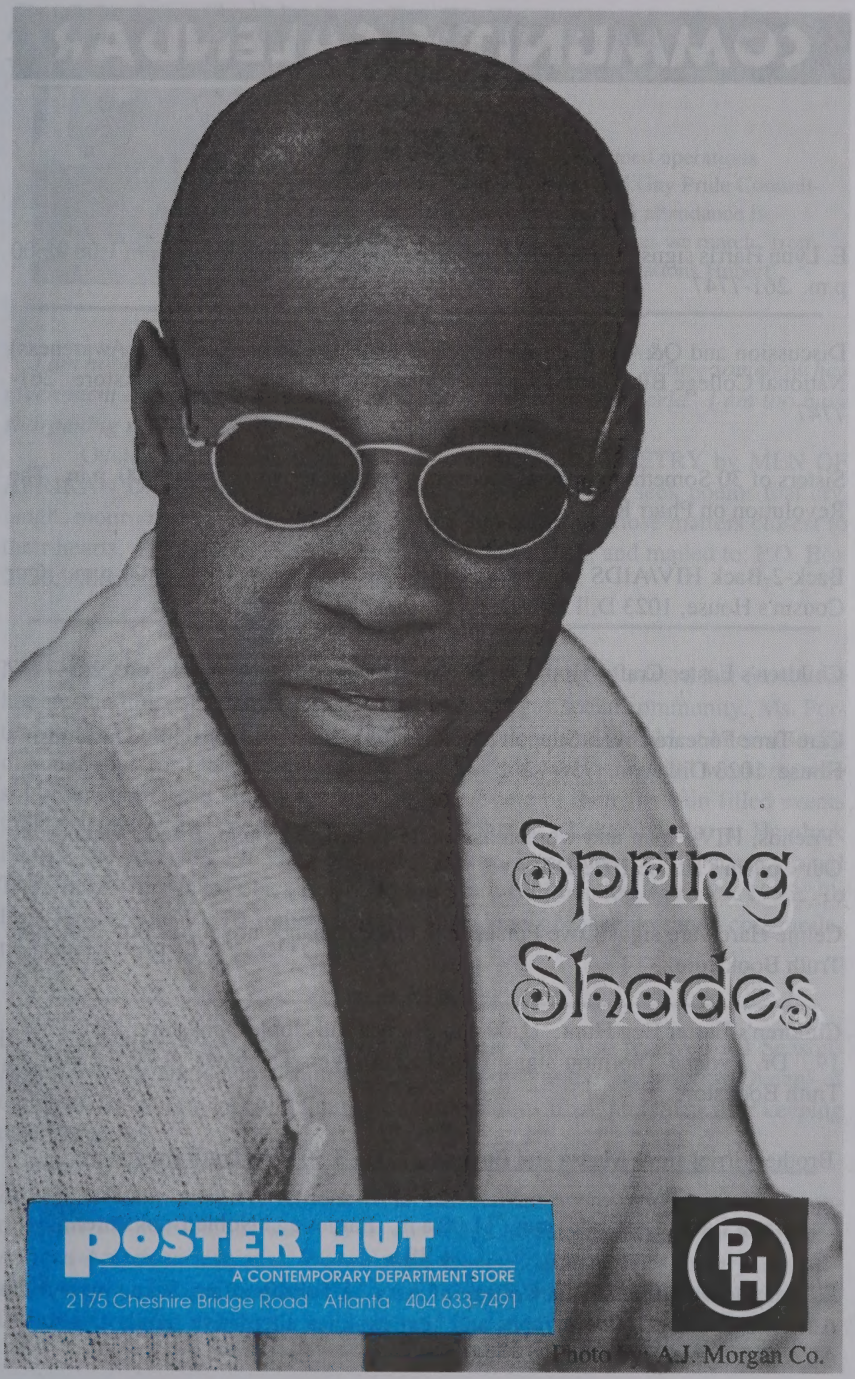
Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee (ALGPC) is accepting applications for the 1995 Pride Market form all Artists, Vendors, and Organizations. This year's 25th anniversary edition of The Pride Market will be held on June 24&25, 1995 in Piedmont Park. For information and applications, call the Pride Line at 404-662-4533 or write to ALGPC Pride Market, P.O. BOX 54024, ATLANTA, GA, 30308-0024. DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS MAY 1, 1995.

FULL TIME ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Venus Magazine is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Account Executive to sell display advertising. This is an outside full time sales position. Previous sales experience is preferred. There is a monthly mileage allowance and commission program. If you believe that you can sell, then sell yourself to us! Call Venus line at 404-622-8069, (24 Hours), and tell us why you would like to join the southeast's hottest new magazine!

Venus

OUT & ABOUT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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

April

• 1 •

E. Lynn Harris signs Just As I Am at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. 261-7747

• 3 •

Discussion and Q&A session with cyclists of Pedro Zamora's (AIDS Awareness) National College Bike Tour, 8:oo - 9:00 p.m. at Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

• 7 •

Sisters of 30 Something Special sponsors a spirituality workshop. 7:00 p.m., The Revolution on Pharr Rd.

•10 •

Back-2-Back HIV/AIDS support meeting EACH Monday, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue.

• 11 •

Children's Easter Crafts Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

•11 •

Care Time For care Givers Support Meeting. Each Tuesday, &;)) - 9:00. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave.. 756-9202

• 12 •

Friends, HIV+ men and women assemble 10:00 - 2:00 p.m. EACH Wednesday. Our Cousin's House.1023 Dill Ave. 404-756-9202

• 14 •

Celine Hardware signs Love Forsaken, a black romance novel. 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore.

• 15 •

Children's Easter Egg Hunt. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

19 Dr. Yvonne Thornton signs The Ditch Diggers Daughter. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore

• 21 •

Brother Erriel signs Maasa and Beyond. 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Truth Bookstore

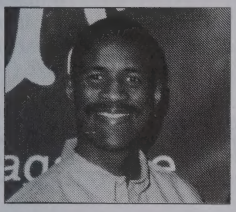
• 25 •

Children's Earth day Craft Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

• 30 •

Last day to visit the Atlanta College of Art's "A Family affair; Sexuality and the American Family". Photographs and Text explores alternative family life-styles. ACA Gallery, M-S 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Herbert Alexander has been named operations manager for Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. This year, African-American attendance is expected to be at an all time high as we march "from silence to celebration." Congratulations Hubert!

"...I am not of that sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low down dirty deal. No, I do not weep at the world. I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife." Zora Neale Hurston

Oyster Knife Publishing presents A CALL FOR POETRY by MEN OF AFRIKAN DESCENT (Latino, Carribean, U.S. Born). We seek poems that cry, laugh, mourn and worship. We seek poems that celebrate those matters closest to their hearts. All submissions should be typed, in English, and mailed to: P.O. Box 2726, Atlanta, Georgia, 30301, by June 15, 1995.

New York City's Lois Porter received the Annual 4 Seasons Award last month for her outstanding contributions to the black lesbian / gay social community. Ms. Porter founded Les' Amies 32 years ago. The group is one of the oldest known social organizations for black lesbians. She started with twelve hospital workers, who sold dinners to raise money for their affairs, Some of their first fun filled events took place at an upstate New York Resort, Johnson's Lake and also at Hemlock Farm. The year was 1963 and after all this time, Les' Amies is still going strong! Their next event takes place in Brooklyn's Marc Ballroom on April 29, 1995. To Lois Porter, who is "70-something" this year, Venus Magazine sends congratulations and a hearty "YOU GO GIRL!"

Bess Knowings of Simplicity Attraction of New York also received a 4 Seasons Award for outstanding contributions. Bess is known as the "networking Queen" of the black lesbian social community. Congratulations Bess, and thanks for keeping us plugged in!

ZAMI, Atlanta's premiere African-American lesbian organization is seeking submissions for possible inclusion in an anthology of coming out stories written by African-American lesbians. We welcome letters, journal entries, poetry and personal essays. Please send submissions to Mary Anne Adams at, P.O. Box 2502, Decatur, Georgia, 30331.

NATIONAL EVENTS

APRIL

1

D.C.
Phatt Baby Productions "Spring Has Sprung" Fashion Show & Dance. Days Inn, 2700 New York Ave., N.E. 10 - 3 a.m.. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $12. / $15.. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

2

D.C.
Mawava Social Club's Annual "April Fool Madness". Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 4 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $10. - $12.

8

New York
Annual Black and Gold Affair, by Simplicity Attractions of New York. Marc Ballroom. 27 Union Sq., West, NYC. Entertainment, open bar, buffet, after 5 wear. $30. Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073

9

D.C.
Lady B. Productions' Annual Show. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 6 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. $5. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

Atlanta
African-American Family Reunion of Gays and Lesbians (AFROGAL) presents the first annual AFROGAL Pageant. Tribute to the 70's. Doors open at 9 p.m. $5. adv. / $7. door. Contact Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467

14

New York
"The Sisters" ski weekend, Mount Laurel Resort. Whitewater, Pa. (Poconos). For more info call Dawn Soto. (718) 5198593, or Barbara Rooks (718) 429-6726

15

Atlanta
Our Cousin's House Annual Easter Basket Raffle. Midnite, Loretta's, 3rd & Spring St. (404) 874-8125

16

D.C.
An Easter Sunday Extravaganza with Krystal Snow. Brass Rail, 476 K St., N.W. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, buffet, cash bar. $6. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

Atlanta
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents a "post" Freaknic Dance at Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

27

Atlanta
Women's Day Camp Weekend. April 27 - 29, 1995, at The River's Edge. Private membership only campground. (706) 213-8081

28

Atlanta
Sisters of Thirty-Something Special present their "Single to Mingle" gathering. Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

New York
Elaine and Company presents "An Oldies but Goodies Party!" Contact Elaine at (212) 242-8610, or Barbara (212) 741-3467. $20. M.L.K. Labor Center, 310 West 43 St., (off 8th Ave.) NYC

29

New York
Les' Amies, one of New York's oldest black lesbian social groups, will present its annual affair. 10 - 3 a.m. at the Marc Ballroom. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. Contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

MAY

6

Baltimore
Simplicity Attraction's Annual Help Them Buffet. Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins St., 5 p.m. - 12 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, BYOL, munchies, free set-ups. Attire - casual. Tickets $15. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

17

Atlanta
"I Remember Venus" ...friends of Venus Landin meet at Kalo's Coffee House, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open Mic, readings and songs. Come share your memories. (404) 325-3733. No Cover, any donations accepted will benefit the Lamda Community Center.

20

Baltimore
Cricket and Beverly's White Affair. Dundalk Union Hall. 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Dancing, buffet, free beer & wine, BYOL. Tickets $20. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

MEMORIAL DAY 26 WEEKEND !!

D.C.
Woo-Babi & Carter Associates' Weekend Wet Party. Days Inn, 2700 N.Y. Ave., N.E. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m., bikini fashion show, mini-show, exotic dancers, cash bar, lavish buffet, dancing. $12. adv., $15. door.

27

Los Angeles
At the Beach... ATB presents its National Kickoff Celebration! Watch for details! (213) 969-1619
Atlanta
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents Comfort Zone Productions, a NYC theater troupe, in "The Personals". Two shows; 4 p.m. matinee, 8 p.m. evening. West End Performing Arts Center. $12. adv. / $15. door. Call (404) 804-8381
Atlanta
Hospitality Atlanta presents its annual Memorial day Party. Doors open at 10 p.m. (404) 627-1630

28

Atlanta
Hospitality Atlanta returns to Red Top Mountain for the 4th annual Memorial Day Picnic Celebration on beautiful Lake Alatoona; one hour north of the city. 11 a.m. til dusk! Music, dancing, fun and frolic. Vendors call (404) 627-1630

Atlanta
Venus Magazine presents the 1st Annual **Memorial Day Salute to the Black Arts Community.** Odella's 1231 W. Peachtree St. Doors open at 9 p.m. Festive attire. Meet and greet some of our nation's finest! Music, dancing, buffet, live show case, jazz saxophonist, obu, on the patio. $10. The following tickets / stubs / 2-for-1! Jelly's Last Jam, Sophisticated Ladies, The Personals, The Dance Theater of Harlem, Talking Bones, Mississippi Delta, Blues for an Alabama Sky, Raisin,A Lady and A Woman, Sensuality, and Servant of the People.

D.C.
Marcking Productions Black Gay Pride Celebration. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 9 p.m. - 3 a.m. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar, $5.
Atlanta
WOMANWRITES '95: 17th annual conference for lesbian writers. May 28 - June 4th. One hour south of the city. Workshops, readings, meals, dormitory sleeping, lake. $70. - $100. Send SASE by May 15th! Silver Circle, Rt. 5, Box 100, Holly Springs, MS 38635 or contact Maree at (502) 966-2420

JUNE

8

New York
Simplicity Attractions of N.Y. presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS., June 8-11, Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swim suit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings. (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701
Atlanta
"AFROGAL" present the 1st Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of gays and lesbians. Clarion Hotel, June 8 - 11. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, (404) 370-1392

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Venus

Listed below are some of the places you can pick up your FREE copy of Veunus Maga zine

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306 Pharr Rd.
233-3333

OXFORD BOOKS
2345 Peachtree Rd,
364-2700

BARNES & NOBLE
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261-7747

BRUSHSTROKES
1510 Piedmont Rd.
876-6567

CHARIS BOOKS
1189 Euclid Ave.
524-0304

TASTY GRAPHICS
588 Woodward Ave. S.E.
522-3333

MILANO PIZZA & SUBS
736 Ponce de Leon Ave.
874-2255
S. Hairston & Redan
(Stone Mountain)
297-9007

SEVANANDA
Euclid Ave.
681-2831

AIDS EDUCATION SERVICE
753-7733

SISTER LOVE, INC.
1432 Donnelly Ave.
763-7733

WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)
306 Luckie St.
577-9510

LORETTA'S
708 Spring St.
874-8125

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931- Monroe Dr.
607-0082

POSTER HUT
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933-7491

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616-4307

PEARL GARDEN
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524-0036

TIME TO TRAVEL
736 Ponce de Leon Ave.
881-9653

RAG TOP SALON
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Venus™

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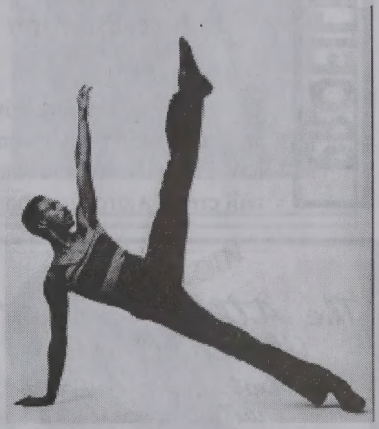

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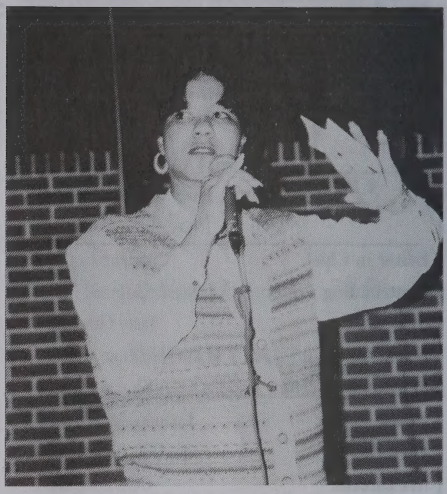

Traci came to Atlanta with a vision to provide a social, entertaining, and networking environment for the women of our community. She now heads the Atlanta chapter of Sisters of 30 Something Special. " We will create a stronger, more connected and unified sisterhood."

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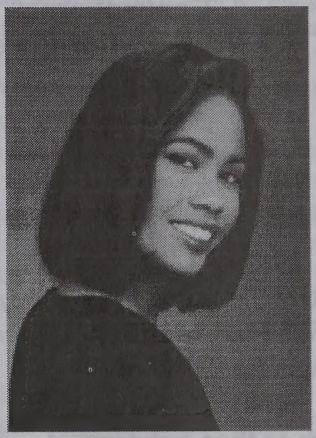

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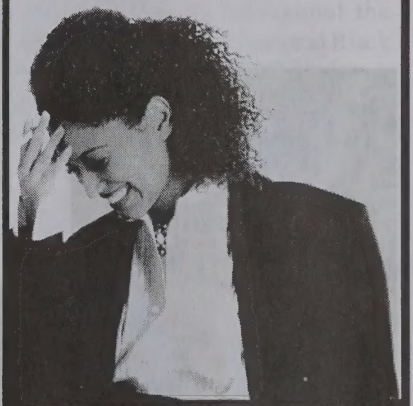

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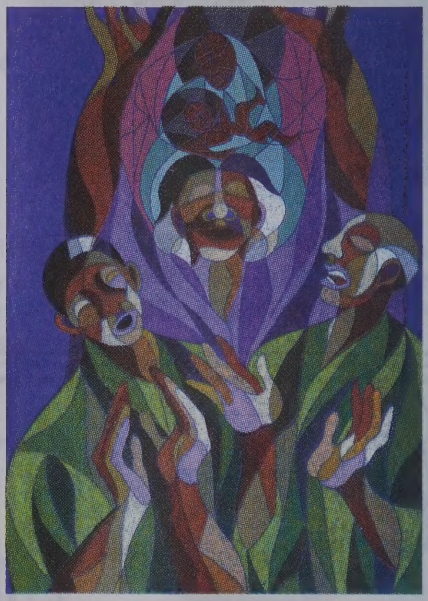

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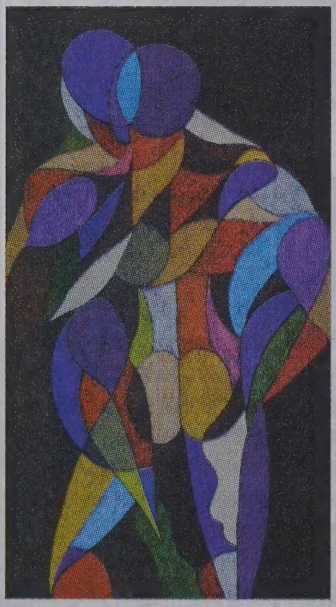

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ARTS

AFRIKINETIC

THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA!

AFRIKINETIC, the dancer's diaspora where movement, percussion and interpretation are reunited will debut in Atlanta, February 5,1995. It is an originally copyrighted term which describes this new approach to Afrikan dance. AFRI-(from the word afrika) and KINETIC-(meaning movement). Thus, AFRIKINETIC—The movement of Afrika.

Afrikan dance has a cultural function designed to support and preserve values of the community. The practice of the dance is sacred since it is engaging in an ancestral continuum based upon vital components of an Afrikan reality.

This technique emphasizes the relationship between dance, drum, tradition and spirit AFRIKINETIC seeks to elevate Afrikan dance by showing the special relationship between the dancer's movement, drummer's rhythm, ancestral mission (tradition) for performing the dance and the indigenous life force (spirit) which Permeates this collective experience.

With an emphasis upon folkloric tradition, AFRIKINETIC will bridge the void between movement and interpretation. This multi-faceted approach allows the dancer to realize the uniqueness of the movement as one of tribal/familial customs. Therefore, this approach deepens and strengthens one's understanding of the dance. It is the specific movement of a particular people focused together for a certain reason for the good of the community. It is ritual dance movement.

The instructor, Waleed Elkan has been performing Afrikan dance for sixteen years in addition to supplementing his work via independent studies of Afrikan culture, folklore and religion. He is a graduate of Emerson College and began his Afrikan Dance studies with DeAlma Battle with The Art of Black Dance and Music in Boston.

Upon relocating to Atlanta, he performed with the Afrikan Dance Ensemble studying directly under Teteh Adagho, the 1991 Bronze Jubilee Recipient for Dance. He has performed in numerous festivals throughout the Southeast, including the National Black Arts Festival, Piedmont Arts Festival, and the International Dance Festival. He has also spent time in Managua where he taught at the Sandinista Cultural Workers Institute in Nicaragua. Waleed was instrumental in the creation of Adebonajo Afrikan Dance Theatre and the Madieo Afrikan Dance Ensemble here in Atlanta. He has also taught Afrikan Dance at Georgia State University.

AFRIKINETIC
THE MOVEMENT OF AFRIKA

REUNITING DRUM, DANCE and SPIRIT

Waleed Elkan
Instructor

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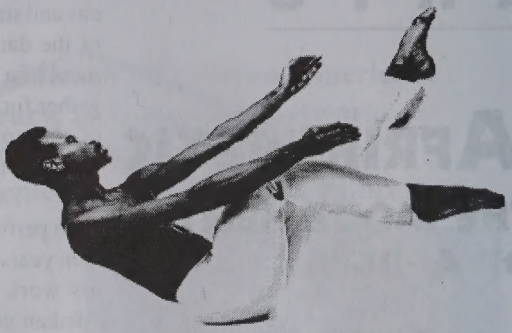
THE BODY TEMPLE

by Kamau Ifoma



"God made it, God love everything you love - and a mess of stuff you don't But more than anything else, God love admiration...I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it... people think pleasing God is all God care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back."

The wise words of Shug Avery from "THE COLOR PURPLE" by Alice Walker

How many times in your life have you heard the scripture which states that your body is the temple of God. It is to be cherished and worshipped and cared for with the same respect and care that you would give to your God.

I can remember as a child wondering if they were really talking about my body. Had they ever even seen my body? A little pudgy here. Uncoordinated there. Pimples a bit of everywhere. And this is the 'temple of God?' What God would want to live in this? (and when those issues of sex and sexuality began to surface), My question transformed to 'why would God want to live in this house of sin?'

My question, spoken loudly (in the silence of my soul), began to beat on me with the vigor and intensity of one 'good ole bashing'. I, who had always held a strong consciousness of loving myself, was now beginning to question the validity of that love. As my question turned into pain and my pain into fear, I began to dislike and neglect the 'temple' in which my God lives. Just as a house, which is neglected, becomes unprotected from the elements of self-hatred, low self-esteem and poor self-body image. With the frame, outer covering and windows of my temple shattered my soul became dis-eased (not-at-ease).

It was around this time that something wonderful happened. I was fresh out of college, working in the mental health profession. I was teaching adolescents how to be mentally healthy; how important it was to love themselves, unconditionally, regardless of what everyone around them may be saying or thinking of them, loving themselves, the whole self, was the only remedy to their healing.

There is an old African proverb that says, "if you are in hiding, don't light

a fire." With each piece of advice that I would give to one of the adolescents, I would also spark another flame within myself. A flame that began to expose the unworthiness that I felt for myself. I became hungry for a means of freeing myself from this temple of doom. I soon became a student of the self-help methods which I was offering to my clients. The methods which simply say; we must love our whole self unconditionally.

It's not enough to want to love yourself. It's not enough to dream of a body image that you could or would love, if you could have it. You must learn to love yourself just as you are.

You must learn to love your 'body temple' just as it is. Loving yourself and your body, right now, gives you permission to begin the process of expressing the love you've got inside and wearing it on the outside. The body is the protector of all that you are within. The body is also the first image of your true inner self that you and others see. When you harbor feelings of being unworthy or unprotected the body breaks down. With nothing to protect or 'show off', the body has little reason to be its best. It has no reason to be a Taj Mahal. It becomes a shack.

As a shack you have no purpose. You are just there. You allow anyone or anything to treat you anyway. You may say to yourself, 'love doesn't live here, so it matters not how you treat me. It's OK to abuse me physically, mentally and emotionally. You're only doing to me, outwardly, what I am doing to myself, inwardly.' As the Taj Mahal you are a 'symbol' of beauty, strength and longevity. No one or nothing can abuse or take advantage of you because you house the ruler of your universe, you! Now you can say, 'I am the love that lives here. I treat myself with respect, trust, patience and joy. You can only be a visitor here if you treat me the same.'

Always remember that you are created by and in the image and likeness of the divine. This makes you Divine. You should worship your temple and its contents 24-7-365! Don't 'piss God off' by not noticing the beauty that you express. Whenever and as often as possible get in the mirror naked and love yourself. Physically and emotionally naked. Allow yourself to be in awe of this creation which is being expressed as you. Look yourself over, completely. Don't miss a spot. And love every bit of it. You will never truly love yourself without loving your body, as well. Be a symbol of beauty, strength and longevity and call it YOU!

LET'S EACH AFFIRM:

MY BODY IS THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OF MY INNER BEAUTY. IT IS MY TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE. IT IS THE TRUE REPRESENTATION OF LOVE!

Kamau Ifoma is a freelance writer and founder of Home Free Ministry.

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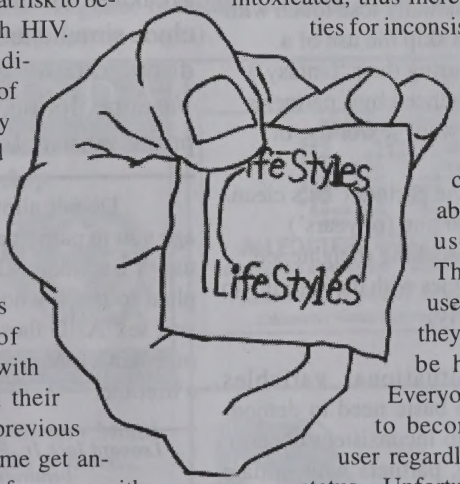
HEALTH

CONDOM USE

THERE IS NO ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION!

It has been asked why condom use is compromised repeatedly. Why are many individuals on a road leading to self-destruction? Why are many who travel this self-destructive path so determined to take other unwanted passengers with them? What is really going on?

First, most individuals at risk do not perceive they are at risk to becoming infected with HIV. Although studies indicate that knowledge of AIDS is exceptionally high among gay and bisexual African-American men. Many black gay men, however, have negative attitudes about the use of condoms and react with intense anger when their partners ask about previous sexual contacts. Some get angry when a partner refuses sex without a condom. Others may perceive (the use of) comdoms as interference with foreplay and sexual pleasure.



The use of comdoms falls into three basic categories: non-users, sporadic users, and ritualistic users. Non-users are individuals who may be less confident in their ability to discuss condoms or to insist on their use with a sexual partner. Sporadic users are individuals who use condoms inconsistently.

Both non-users and sporadic users are more likely to have multiple sex partners. They may also have sex while intoxicated, thus increasing opportunities for inconsistent or improper use. Ritualistic users are individuals who are able to clearly communicate about the important use of condoms. They insist on its use consistently and they are less likely to be heavy drinkers. Everyone should strive to become a ritualistic user regardless of your HIV status. Unfortunately, for some gay and bisexual men, knowing that their HIV status is negative has been perceived as a 'green light' to continue business as usual — unprotected sex and multiple partner.

Among African-American gay

and bisexual men, some reasons for NOT using a condom may include:

1) Being in a steady relationship ('we've been together 2 years')
2) Being unprepared ('it just happened')
3) Being irresponsible ('couldn't be bothered')
4) Using alcohol and/or other drugs while having sex.
5) Being bisexual (a bisexual man may not perceive his level of risk as being that of a homosexual, when in actuality a bisexual man offers 'double jeopardy' by possi bly infecting or being infected by individuals on both sides of the fence.)
6) Perceiving the sexual partner as extremely attractive (some black gay & bisexual men get so caught up in their partner's good looks that they actually lose touch with reality and skip the use of a condom during their 'fantasy')
7) Being influenced by a partner's attitude toward sex/or use of condoms.
8) Knowing the partner ('he's clean. I've known him for years')
9) Sensation seeking (heightened arousal comes with the inability to think clearly)

These situational variables coupled with the basic need to demonstrate trust lead to inconsistent condom use. Commonly, partners who initiate condom use early in a relationship will eventually abandon use with the longevity of the relationship.

Condom norms, or patterns of use, have been established and have been very difficult to change over the past five years. There are still African-American men who feel they have 'messed up once, twice, many times' by not using a condom. This prior sexual history, along with the fear of getting tested and knowing that there IS NO cure for AIDS, has left some African-American gay and bisexual men feeling lost and hopeless. This dilemma may fuel a continued downward spiral to self-destruction as evident by no changes in inappropriate sexual behaviors.

There is absolutely no room for negotiation. Condoms should be used every time any form of sexual intimacy (oral, vaginal and anal sex) is experienced.

It is equally as critical to use the condom correctly, because incorrect use may lead to slipping or breakage. Some improper uses include simultaneous use of two condoms during sex, and use of Vaseline, lotion, or other inappropriate lubricants.

Do not allow anyone to encourage you to participate in sex without the use of a condom. This rule must be applied to those who are engaging in casual sex AND those who would like to maintain a monogamous relationship for a lifetime.

Leonard Jack,Jr., Ph.D. is a health and behavior scientist

Photo by: Ron Singleton

These glowing sisters enjoyed the National Black Bay and Lesbian Summit earlier this year in Los Angeles, including Atlanta's Pat Hussain (2nd from left), and L.A.'s Ruth Waters, (right).

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WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

"What's Going on in Your Life" is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day-to-day living. Whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals...

So tell us - - What's going on in your life?

Dear Geanie,

I'm a 24 year old male happily engaged to a wonderful young lady who vows to spend the rest of her life with me. However, when I was 16 another male about 2 years older then I took advantage of me. I have to admit I did enjoy it. I kept that our secret. Last week I told my best friend I was engaged. He hugged me and congratulated me. He then shared with me that he's bisexual. I was stunned. Since then he has made many passes and I have found myself wanting him. He doesn't know that I want him as much as he wants me, but I do love my girl.

What I'm asking is should I tell him how I feel about him and take the chance to ruin my relationship or should I just let him continue to come on to me and I play like it's not happening and marry the girl I love?

Confused

Dear Confused,

You have labeled yourself, whether you are clearly aware or not, VERY accurately.

When you were sixteen you were molested by an adult. The issue here is not wether it was pleasurable or not, but that someone took advantage of you. This can confuse your sexual identity, confuse your feelings, and confuse appropriate boundaries, to name a few.

This "secret" has a profound effect on your life ongoing. This needs to be worked through.

It is apparent that you remain sexually attracted to your best friend. Whether this represents bisexual or true homosexual

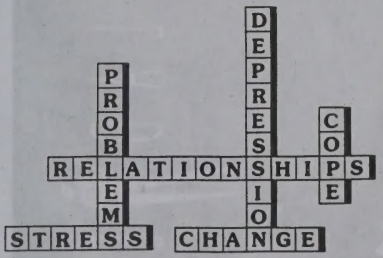
feelings is a matter for exploration in an appropriate setting, namely counseling. Please understand that sexual attraction, had you been attracted to another female, would be somewhat less complicated. This situation would be purely sexual attraction and I would request that you respond to your one-on-one commitment promises to your fiancee'. However, this appears to be more than sexual attraction and may bring into play "Sexual identity" issues. It would be emotionally destructive for the two of you to live an untrue heterosexual existence with your true yearnings completely or partially elsewhere. And, her expectations that ALL of your inner yearnings are with her.

The healthiest course would be to enter counseling and explore "Same sex" yearnings. This would be your premarital task.

Then you and your psychotherapist/counselor could speak to whether or not it would be advisable to act on these feelings. As well as, the necessity to reveal these feelings to your fiancee'.

Geanie Bond is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in the Atlanta area. Address your letters to: Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Ga. 30312 or fax: (404) 622-8089

When Life Becomes A Puzzle..



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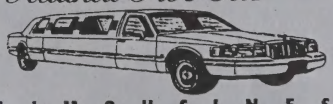

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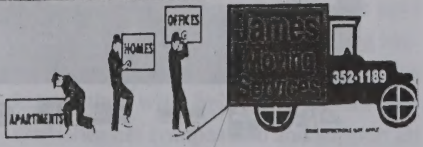

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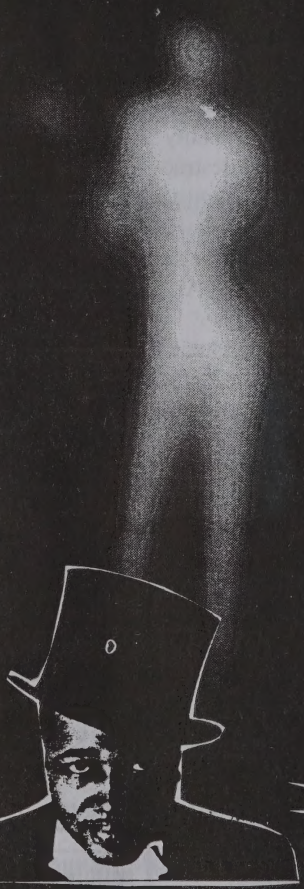

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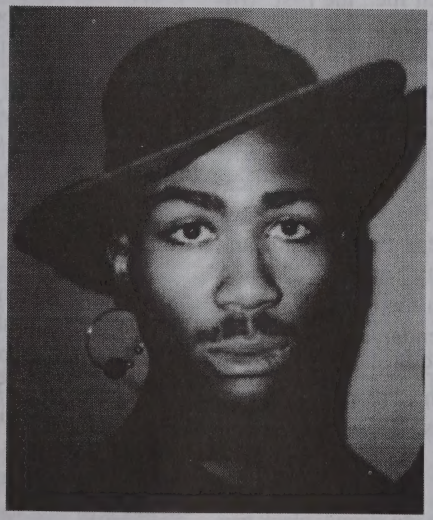
WAOK VJ03 WCLK WRPO 89.3 FM ARTS TIME TO TRAVEL

TRE JOHNSON: A GENTLE AND FIERCELY DETERMINED HERO

by Shirlene Holmes

There are a number of ways to describe Leigh Tre Johnson. One could begin with his beautiful catlike eyes or his contagious smile or that delicious southern twist of his dialect, which puts you in the mind of a large plate of macaroni and cheese, collard greens, cord bread, fried chicken and candied yams. One could even begin by telling you about his great talents: his soul stirring singing, his frank honest writing on the black gay experience or his activist's roar. But it seems most appropriate to describe this kind gentle hero as a great spirit with abundant dermination.



Tre Johnson is one of Atlanta's finest southern belles, and is especially proud of it. He thinks nothing of proclaiming his black southern heritage. "Atlanta is black and white, no in betweens," he says. Johnson is not ashamed of the stereotypes folks conjure up when they think southern, black and gay; he is no stereotype. This gentle man feels that the south is his true motherland. It has been the place where he was planted and broke through the soil.

Tre was raised in Georgia, just like the peaches and okra. Fortunately, he has always had a family that supported and loved him. He is the youngest and only son of a blues singing father and devoutly pious Jehovah's Witness mother. Tre says his earliest memories are of hearing music and singing with his dad. He credits his mother with being his anchor and cherishes her compassion and support all through out his life.

Though sheltered by the love of

family, Tre certainly bore the cross growing up in the deep south. He testifies this way: "being a sissy and a lighted skinned black is heavy, but having AIDS is the cherry on top."

Tre Johnson has battled AIDS since 1990, when he was diagnosed at 19 years old. Now at 24, five years later, he has made peace with the disease that has so ravaged his body and changed his life. He shares with confidence, "AIDS came to look for heroes". And Tre is indeed a hero, having endured sickness and having worked hard to see to it that the plights of people living with AIDS as well as black gays and lesbians are heard. He prides himself in having been a spokesperson for Outreach Inc., the first African American AIDS organization founded in the city of Atlanta. He also has been courageous as a writer and performing artist. For awhile now he has been asserting his views as an author. His writings have appeared in such publications as "The Road Before Us / 100 black gay poets" (Galliens Press, 1990) and "Bound by Diversity", an Page 2 anthology of voices from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities (Sebastian Press, 1994).

As a youth, Tre confesses he searched for heroes. He found most of them to be female: the black women in his life as well as those in the history books. He longed to see strong, black gay men to emulate, but there were none. Now he is the one displaying the valor as he fights back against chronic illness and lifts his voice loudly against oppression.

Tre talks freely about AIDS, unflinching, so well aware of the death surrounding him. He is both a three time survivor of pneumonia, as well as, according to Tre, a survivor of the machinations of the medical practitioners. Having AIDS has truly changed Tre's life. He says candidly, "AIDS is a mind disease. You've got to think and make decisions." He is quick to share his impression of his health care treatment:

"Medicine is just like witchcraft —— a practice." He adds, "blacks are not studied nor respected; we have second class status in AIDS care and research. AIDS is a money making thing, the latest craze. We are going to have to start healing ourselves, like we always have had to do."

Johnson believes in the inner power and strength of blacks to overcome. Johnson is not scared of death. He has lost over 200 friends and comrades to AIDS, the closest being his mentor, publisher, poet, performer and activist, Assotto Saint, who passed away in July of 1994.

Johnson credits his openness about AIDS and his sexuality with the fact that he is not ashamed. He adamantly believes that shame keeps black gays vulnerable. "AIDS is a time bomb ticking in our community," Johnson says. He feels the disease is fueled by ignorance, confusion, misinformation and lies. "Our silence is killing us," Johnson says of the black gay community. He believes AIDS has created an urgency now despite the fact that black gays still believe it will not happen to them. Until we conquer that silence, as a black lesbian and gay community, we will be behind. He strongly contends that we must liberate ourselves, have a Harriet Tubman attitude about black lesbian and gay freedom. We must break down stereotypes. It is Tre's

hope that one day, when black lesbians and gays look in the mirror or in each other's eyes, they will no longer be scared of their own reflection. They will not be ashamed to claim who they are.

At his young age, Tre is content, feeling he has done what he has desired with his life. He has no regrets and is very proud of what he has become. Smiling he says he does not want for anything and spends his time doing as he pleases, which for him is truly the meaning of living. In his opinion, most people are not really living. They are merely surviving, caught up in the rat race of working and trying to make ends meet.

Tre celebrates his life and manhood, affirming he never wanted to be a stereotypical gay black man. He takes great pride in his manhood, and feels blessed to possess the heart of a woman, which for him is a special sensitivity to others and the world. Frankly, he abhors the negative image most hold of gay black men and has always strived to set a positive example.

Tre Johnson has numerous accomplishments. He is a proud graduate of Northside School of the Arts. He credits his training at his alma mater in singing, performing and dance as being a factor of his survival. Tre came of age at Northside, finding other black gays to identify with, and also finding his voice as an artist. Tre's poetry and prose have appeared in "Amethyst", "Southern Voice", "The James White Review" and "Eyeball". He has appeared on local and national stages, as well as in theatre abroad: London, France and Brussels. Mostrecently he appeared in several local productions, among them are "Legends Past and Present", "Souls On Fire" and "Warren".

According to Tre, he writes and performs to break the silence. "We must speak now or forever be silenced," he says.

Johnson is very afraid for the black gay literary community because most of its pioneers are dead, dying or presently disabled and, thus, unable to take the reins. He feels there is a need for leadership. Leaders must emerge that are not afraid nor ashamed. They must be fair, outspoken and tough.

Tre is pleased that Venus magazine now exists, feeling it is a vehicle to educate our community. He admonishes, "we need our own. We cannot expect the white lesbian and gay community to liberate us."

Tre says with an assured calm that he knows his ultimate silence is coming. He has no regrets and is willing to pay the price. Tre says, "I'm paying for speaking up with my heels up." He continues with the utmost frankness, "I won't live to see the cure." He says people with AIDS should be treated as royalty and accorded dignity and respect. And even further, they should be made comfortable in their last days. Tre says it took him a many years to fight, but he will no longer be terrorized because of his race, sexuality or disease. He says with no apologies, "I'm wearing all of my titles: PWA, gay, black, southern and man".

Certainly, this singer, writer, performer and activist proves that gentleness is not weakness. We celebrate Leigh Tre Johnson, a true hero.

EDUCATION

BROTHERS BACK 2 BACK

Brothers Back 2 back, Inc. is an Atlanta based network, supporting the ever-present needs of the HIV-positive African-American male. Brother Back 2 Back was established in February 1993, after seeing a vast increase of African-American males testing positive for HIV disease and needing support.

Our mission is to provide practical, emotional and brotherly support primarily for African American males that are infected with or affected by HIV and AIDS. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. provides a safe and comfortable environment for men that are living with HIV and AIDS to come and explore their feelings and to develop life maintenance plans. Through support, members are encouraged to lead healthy and active lives, knowing they are not alone and knowing they are supported and loved.

In the years to come, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. hopes to extend its arms of support and education beyond Atlanta and into other cities that might need our services. Regardless of age, sexual preference or risk factor, Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is open and we always welcome new members to come and experience the bond of love that exists among us.

At present, we are growing rapidly and instituting many programs for newly infected and affected members. We are attempting to become a full service organization to fulfill all the needs of our members.

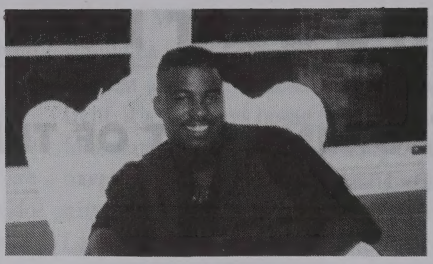
In Atlanta, there are many African-American males infected and affected; some in denial and some who are not. Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is attempting to reach these brothers and tell them that HIV/AIDS does not have to mean a death sentence. It simply means that you must restructure your life. At the same time we offer support, a forum for you to speak out, resources and education for you to tap and take advantage of.

This disease knows no boundaries. It crosses all economic and social lines. No one should have to deal with AIDS alone. If you feel we can help, call us. You can reach us at (404) 593-5805. We meet each Monday evening at 6 p.m. at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30310.

Brothers Back 2 Back, Inc. is not trying to be all things to all people, but we do know about support and how it is desperately needed in our community.

PROFILE OF A MAN

Name:
Craig Craft
Age:
24
Career:
Massage Therapist
Latest Book:
Wouldn't Take Nothing for my Journey Now - Mayou Angelou
Status:
Single Parent
Hometown:
Dallas, texas



Craig enjoys horseback riding, biking, canoeing, helping others, and a activities with his son. "When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us. Stop. Be still. Pay attention. While we're trying to figure it out, He has already worked it out!"

AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH

OUR GOAL IS TO PROVIDE HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND EDUCATION TO ALL AFRICAN AMERICANS AND FOSTER MORE LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THOSE INFECTED AND AFFECTED!

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For more information, call Craig Washington at (404) 872-0600

RELATIONSHIPS

COMING OUT OF THE SECOND CLOSET

By Ulester V. Douglas

As John was telling about the emotional and physical abuse James inflicted in him, one is reminded of a scene from James Earl Hardy's B-Boy Blues. In this scene, Raheim punched Mitchell in the face, sending him soaring over the coffee table. After Mitchell regained consciousness, he reflected on what had just happened:

"I've seen many an episode of Donahue with battered women and I always believed they were stupid: how, just how could they get themselves into such a situation? They had to see some sign before they got involved with him, before they got married. One day they wake up and he just comes out swinging? But I could identify with the helplessness and broken trust, now that I was in their position— or was I? Does it take just one hit? I was trying to make sense of it all and found myself doing exactly the same thing that many of those women did: rationalizing, in a way excusing the man's behavior... Raheim was under a lot of stress. He witnessed the death of his best friend. I had to share some of the blame; I provoked him. If I had just kept my mouth shut...I should have known he would react like that..."

Although this is fiction, Mitchell's rationalization and self-blame lasted only a few minutes. Mitchell was able to recognize in a relatively short time that he was not to blame for Raheim's violent behavior, that he did not provoke him and that nothing justified being abused. Also, Mitchell had supportive friends who affirmed that Raheim was responsible for his own actions regardless of the circumstances.

This is not the case for John and thousands of other gay men who are being battered by their partners. Most victims believe that they are to blame for their partner's abusive actions; that they provoked him and deserve to be abused. This is because the batterer is extremely skilled at making the victim feel that way.

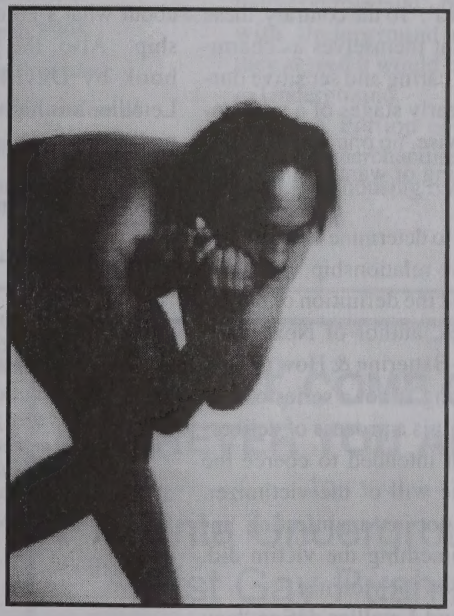
One of his manipulative tactics is to isolate the victim from friends and family.

The batterer convinces the victim that friends and family are no good and are a threat to their relationship. In doing this, the batterer ensures that there is hardly anyone the victim can trust and talk to about what's going on.

There is no one to do a reality check; no one to say that it is wrong; that the name calling, hitting, and threatening are all so

wrong; no one to say that forcing the victim to have sex because of how much he loves the batterer is really about the batterer's need for power and control.

Isolation contributes to a very low disclosure rate. Most gay men who are abuse by their partner or ex-partner do not disclose that they are being abused. They calculate that it is safer to stay in this 'second closet' and that the incentives for coming out are few to none.



There is hardly anything in the literature or media that validates the existence of gay male victims. Like Mitchell, when they look at the talk shows, they only see and hear about 'stupid women' who stay in these relationships; 'stupid women' who should have seen it coming. Where are the men? Where are the men who have to constantly walk on eggshells and do not feel comfortable in their own home? Where are the men who are forced to have unprotected sex with partners who sleep around? Where are the men who live in fear that the next time they may be dead?

Sadly, the message sent is that men are not victims, only perpetrators-Certainly not black men. This myth is perpetuated in the gay community. We do not hold batterers accountable for their actions. We buy into the myths that men should be able to defend themselves; that it's just a lovers' quarrel; that it's just a fight; it's just boys being boys. We look for every possible excuse to deny that we have a serious problem in our community, but, David Island and Patrick Letellier, authors of Men Who Beat the Men Who Love Them, estimate that their are 500,000 victims of gay battering each year, with a number of these resulting in death.

In addition to denying and minimizing the severity of this problem, we say that it is not in our best interest to air our dirty laundry to a homophobic, racist and sexist community. This is especially true if dealing with law enforcement agencies. There is little or nothing in place that encourages a black gay man to report to the police that he is being battered by his partner. Reporting this could mean having to acknowledge that he is gay. He may not be ready to come out and it may not be safe to do so. Also, he risks being laughed at by the police and told to be a man. It is no secret that the law enforcement community has historically been cruel to

black men. Even when we are victims of a crime, we are treated as the perpetrators. Where is a black male victim of battering to go for safety?

Even as we decide whether or not to involve the police, we struggle with recognizing whether or not we are in an abusive relationship. It is difficult for us to accept that the man we fell in love with is now abusing us. It is important to understand that batterers do not walk around with a sign on their forehead that reads 'batterer on board'. To the contrary, these men may present themselves as charming, wonderful, caring and sensitive during dating and early stages of a relationship. And likewise, no one enters a relationship expecting or wanting to be battered.

In order to determine whether you are in an abusive relationship, it is helpful to understand the definition of battering. Ann Jones, author of Next Time She'll Be Dead-Battering & How to Stop It, says, "battering is not a series of isolated blowups. It is a process of deliberate intimidation intended to coerce the victim to do the will of the victimizer. The batterer is not just manifesting 'insecurity' by something the victim did. These are excuses for violence."

Island and Letellier define "gay men's domestic violence" as any unwanted physical, psychological abuse, or material/property destruction inflicted by one man on another. Examples of physical violence include: forced anal, oral, or genital contact; being choked, punched, kicked, pushed, shoved, slapped, grabbed, etc.; being forced to have sex without a condom. Examples of psychological/emotional violence include: being ignored, neglected, isolated, lied to, ridiculed; threatening to kill the victim, self or other; threatening to leave the relationship; threatening to reveal his sexual orientation. Examples of material or property destruction include: destroying clothes, damaging vehicles, breaking furniture, windows and other valuables.

If you have begun to question whether you are in an abusive relationship, the odds are good that you are. Take the risk and talk to someone you trust about what's going on in your relationship. Also, the previously mentioned book by David Island and Patrick Letellier's is highly recommended. Actually, this book is an excellent resource for anyone who wishes to learn more about gay battering.

If you or someone you know is being abused, there is a support group, call (404) 325-2484 for more information. Dr. Gus Kaufman and Ulester Douglas are currently forming a class in the Atlanta area for gay/bisexual men who use physical and/or psychological abuse, or property destruction against another man, please call (404) 320-0090 for more information.

404 455-0835

Ulester V. Douglas, LMSW
Therapy - Individual, Couples, Family

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Atlanta, GA 30340

PROFILE OF A BUSINESS

Sisters Open the 1st Gay Cart in Underground.

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We the People
Location:
Underground Atlanta
Owners:
C and C
Established:
March 1995
Service Provided:
Retail merchandise of interest to the Gay / Lesbian community.

After living in Atlanta for several years, we noticed that there were very few places to buy gay paraphernalia, and none in a mall setting. After two years of research, we decided to open a pushcart in Underground Atlanta. Our proposal was denied initially due to being "potentially controversial", but as we talked with Underground management, they agreed it would be a great asset to Underground.

A Portion of the proceeds from the merchandise will be used to provide housing for children with aids.

PROFILE OF A QUEEN

Name:
Ysatis Givenchy
Status:
"Involved"
Age:
23
Last Book Read:
Book of Angels
Hometown:
San Juan, Puerto Rico
Former Titles:
Miss World Queen

Ysatis is from the U.S. Virgin Islands. Some of her favorite pastimes include shopping, dancing, listening to good music and watching her favorite horror movies.

THE *earl* GARDEN

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REVIEWS

BOOKS

Blanche Among the Talented Tenth

Author: Barbara Neely
by B.J. Jackson

Are you looking for a book that's easy reading, full of wit and humor, intriguing suspenseful, has a mystery to be solved with an extraordinary African American woman as the central character? You say yes! yes! yes! I say pick up BLANCHE AMONG THE TALENTED TENTH.

Blanche White, a dark skinned domestic worker is the central character in this piece of fiction which deals with class and color divisions among African Americans. The story takes place in Maine, at an exclusive resort for Blacks called Amber Cove. Blanche has managed to enroll her children in private school and also notices a change in their attitudes she doesn't like. She accepts an invitation from her children's wealthy friends to visit Amber Cove, which was founded by a man who made his money from skin lightening products. In accepting the invitation, Blanche hopes to get a view of the interaction of her children with their wealthy friends and correct the snotty attitudes her children have started to develop.

Once Blanche arrives the adventure begins. She meets people who look down at her simply because of her dark complexion. Being the feisty, grounded, self-loving woman she is, Blanche has no problem putting them in their place. Blanche also meets a 70 plus year old feminist diva who is a well known author. This diva is the widow of a white man who admires Blanche's wit and spunk. The famous feminist enlist Blanche's help in finding out if the suicide of her godson and fatal accident of the most hated resident of the resort are connected. Blanche is also pursued romantically by a very handsome and suave gentleman. However during the course of her investigation, Blanche discovers the dirty secrets of all the residents of amber Cove including her diva friend and her romantic pursuer.

This is a well written book with an intriguing storyline. It is full of wit and humor and sings the praises of the working class African American woman. Barbara Neely has created a character who is a forty year old domestic worker who has it all together. She introduces us to a feisty black woman with attitude, wit, survival skills and intelligence. This is a book you will not want to put down, a character you will want to meet again and an author you will want to read again, and again and again.

"The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people....The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men."

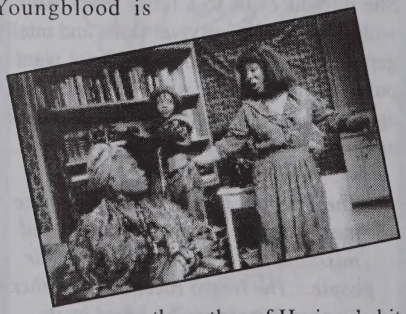
-W.E.B.Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth"

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYS For Your "Must See" List!

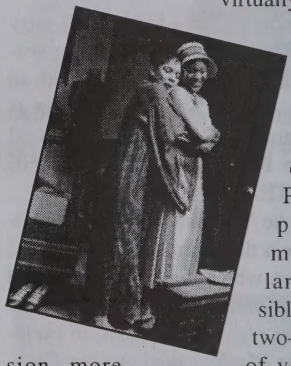
Welcome to Ancestors Books and Breakfast where the menu is... fantastic! Taste our literary and backbone soup. Sip our ink tea and wisdom wine. Sprinkle in some magic and romance, add a dash of comedy, and stir in mystery. Then meet the three generations of African American women who serve up this delicious food for the body and soul in Horizon Theatre Company's Southeastern Premiere of Shay Youngblood's **TALKING BONES**, a 1993 winner of the Lorraine Hansberry Award for Best new Play by an African American writer.

Talking Bones arose from Georgia-born playwright Shay Youngblood's own family experience: "While growing up," she says, "I lived in a house where the elders heard voices. It was understood that these voices were the voices of the ancestors. All of my work tends to be about honoring the ancestors; honoring and listening closely to the inner voice and intuition." In addition to Talking Bones, Shay Youngblood is



the author of Horizon's hit world premiere Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery (both published by Dramatic Publishing Company). It runs from now until April 23rd. For tickets call (404) 584-7450.

According to the Alliance Theater's Kenny Leon, **BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY** will now run through May 14. Leon explains, "For months, BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY has been virtually sold out to our Alliance subscribers and I want to share the excitement of Pearl's new play with as much of Atlanta as possible. With this two-week extension, more of you can hear Pearl's amazing words and witness the unbelievable talents of Phylicia Rashad, Bill Nunn, Gsary Yates, Deidrie Henry and Mark Young."



Cleage's BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY is set amidst Harlem 1930 when "The creative euphoria of the Harlem Renaissance has given way to the harsher realities of the great Depression."

Best known for her work on "The Cosby Show", Phylicia Rashad is a consummate actress and singer with such Broadway credits as JELLY'S LAST JAM, INTO THE WOODS, DREAMGIRLS, THE WIZ, and AIN'T SUPPOSED TO DIE A NATURAL DEATH.

Tickets to BLUES FOR AN ALABAMA SKY are $20.00 and $26.00 and may be purchased at the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office, or by calling 404-733-5000.

ENTERTAINMENT

JOMANDI'S "Sophisticated Ladies"

Jomandi presents it's high energy production of the Broadway hit musical, "Sophisticated Ladies," featuring the seasoned talents of Chandra Currelley, Sheila Stroud and members of Mistyque as well as newer talents like J. Karen Thomas.

"Sixty people auditioned for this show. I wish I could have hired forty, but we can only have twelve or fourteen, "exclaimed director Tom Jones, when asked how auditions went for the upcoming production. "It's the most awesome audition I've ever seen. Each performer was as good as or better than the other. It was a hard call."

The result is a high-powered combination of singers and dancers that signals a resulting level of performances to the music of jazz master Duke Ellington that will be equal to those of the Broadway production. "We never lack for talent, with our productions," continue Jones, "it's just that we don't have the big bucks for the big staging to go along with the 'big' talent.

"It Don't mean a thing," "I got it bad and that ain't good," "take the A train," "solitude," and of course "sophisticated Lady," are but a sampling of the hits in this sophisticated Broadway hit. With the music of Ellington as the driving force, "Sophisticated Ladies" explores Duke's rise from the cotton club in Harlem to African-American classical music royalty. Last season Jomandi gave Atlanta the definitive "Dreamgirls". Join Jomandi this spring when we make the "sophisticated Ladies" a classic all over again.

Advance tickets available at Ticketmaster: 817-8700. For groups, discounts and information, call 876-6346. Runs April 7-May 7.

Hold on to your tickets! Join **Venus Magazine** Memorial Day Weekend for a salute tot the Black Arts community. Sunday, May 28, 1995 at Odella's. Watch for more info!

IS IT EASIER FOR WOMEN TO HIDE?

By Dream

Consider this: one woman gets dressed to go out into the world. She puts on her stockings, her business dress, the appropriate amount of makeup, in the appropriate colors. She combs her hair back into a suitable style for corporate America. She chooses her one inch heels in black to match her purse. Another woman gets dressed to go out into the very same world. She chooses slacks instead of a dress. She forgoes the wearing of makeup. She wears a fashionable blazer to match her slacks. Her hair is clipped into a short natural. She prefers stylish loafers instead of heels. Given the picture of two women, which would you more likely identify as the lesbian? Given that picture, a lesbian who wants to hide, which woman would you more likely be?

The ability to hide is tangled in the roles that women assume in everyday society. We are able to hide using words that are taken for granted. The word "girlfriend" is a good example. How many times do you hear a conversation that starts with, "I was talking to my girlfriend the other day...", or, "My girlfriend was at my house last night and..."? In a heterosexual context, such phrases are benign and almost never cause a raised brow. If such a phrase is uttered along with a wink and an elbow in the side, then it shades the meaning. And that shade of meaning is what a lesbian can hide behind.

Is it easier for women to hide? Yes. Women are supposed to be the gentler, the more affectionate sex. Holding a girlfriend's hand is okay, as long as it is done in a way that is accepted

in a social setting. Hugging your girlfriend for giving you flowers is okay. Seriously kissing your woman for giving you flowers is a different story. Throw an arm about a girlfriend's shoulder and that's okay, too. It's an act of camaraderie. Without that wink and nudge, having your arms about your woman is acceptable.

In a heterosexist and patriarchal society, a woman has a certain amount of status if she can attach herself to a man. I doubt if Scarlet O'Hara would be so admired if it weren't for Rhett Butler. Could Snow White be held up as a fine example of womanhood if she hadn't gotten the royal kiss from her prince?

Allowing people to think that there may be a man somewhere in her distant future, allows a woman to hang on to some of the status afforded by maintaining a heterosexual facade. How many times, if you are not willing to tell an outright lie, have you just smiled when your mother asked you pointedly if there is a significant MAN in your life? Telling her the truth would rob her of her dreams for a man in your life. Not telling her helps her hold out hope and keeps you well hidden.

So outward appearance keeps a woman hidden. Maintaining that facade of potential for some man, somewhere helps keep a woman hidden. Acting the way everyone expects her to act, keeps a woman hidden. That's all it takes. Some women find this easy.

She can hide in the image of heels instead of loafers. She can maintain that independence is her goal and not a man. She can hide if she can handle explaining the love of her life as only a satisfying friendship instead of a grand passion. It isn't easy for a woman to hide when she comes to the conclusion that she loses more than she gains by hiding. It isn't easy to hide a happiness that helps to complete your life. It isn't easy to hide when you decide that the privilege given because you connect yourself with a man isn't worth the trouble. It isn't easy to hide when you believe it's okay to be who you are.

P.O. Box 55410 • Atlanta, GA 30308

HOSPITALITY ATLANTA

Jocelyn Lyles
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BLACK GAY PRIDE WEEKEND

WASHINGTON, D.C.

'95

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND
MAY 26 - MAY 29
$299 PP/DBL
RT AIR FARE HOTEL ACCOMADATION DISCOUNT CAR RENTAL
(PASSES TO EVENTS ADDITIONAL)

THE 4TH ANNUAL PICNIC AT RED TOP MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

$120 PP/DBL
HOTEL ACCOMADATION & TAXES AT DAYS INN

LOS ANGELES AT THE BEACH '95

4TH OF JULY WEEKEND
JUNE 30TH -JULY 3RD
$432 PP/DBL
RT AIR FARE HOTEL ACCOMADATION DISCOUNT CAR RENTALS & TRANSFERS

HOT 'LANTA BLACK GAY PRIDE '95

LABOR DAY WEEKEND
SEPT. 1ST - SEPT. 4TH
TO BE ANNOUNCED

TIME TO TRAVEL

SUPER SPECTACULAR AIR FARES

TIME TO TRAVEL / RIO MALL
(*inside Lambda Pharmacy*) 595 Piedmont Rd.
404-347-9738

OR
TIME

TO TRAVEL / MIDTOWN
736 Ponce de Leon, N.E.
404-881-9653

The 411
ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

1995 PRIDE MARKET APPLICATIONS

Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee (ALGPC) is accepting applications for the 1995 Pride Market form all Artists, Vendors, and Organizations. This year's 25th anniversary edition of The Pride Market will be held on June 24&25, 1995 in Piedmont Park. For information and applications, call the Pride Line at 404-662-4533 or write to ALGPC Pride Market, P.O. BOX 54024, ATLANTA, GA, 30308-0024. DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS MAY 1, 1995.

FULL TIME ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

Venus Magazine is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Account Executive to sell display advertising. This is an outside full time sales position. Previous sales experience is preferred. There is a monthly mileage allowance and commission program. If you believe that you can sell, then sell yourself to us! Call Venus line at 404-622-8069, (24 Hours), and tell us why you would like to join the southeast's hottest new magazine!

Venus

OUT & ABOUT

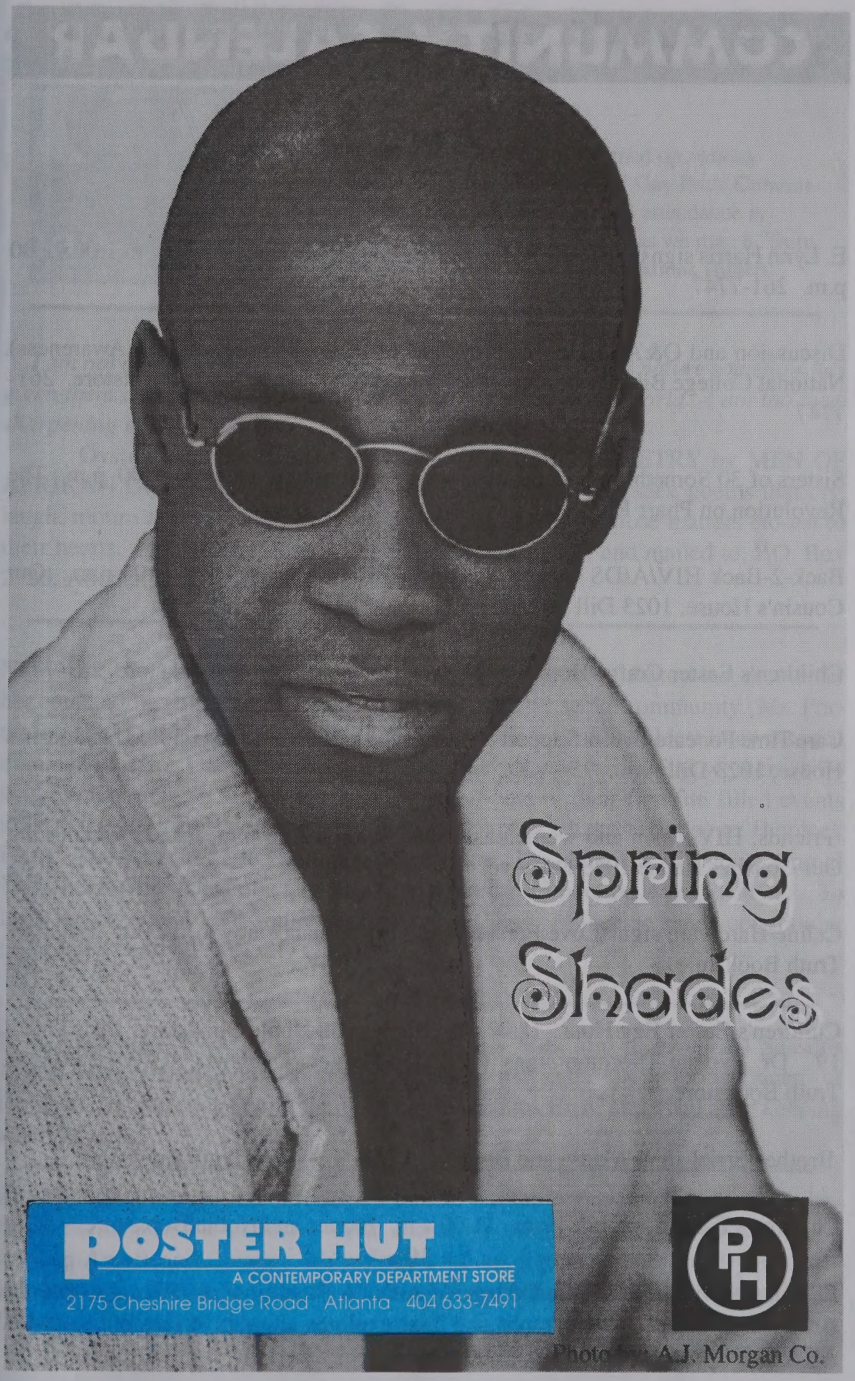
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Photo by A.J. Morgan Co.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

April

•1•

E. Lynn Harris signs Just As I Am at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. 261-7747

•3•

Discussion and Q&A session with cyclists of Pedro Zamora's (AIDS Awareness) National College Bike Tour, 8:oo - 9:00 p.m. at Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

•7•

Sisters of 30 Something Special sponsors a spirituality workshop. 7:00 p.m., The Revolution on Pharr Rd.

•10•

Back-2-Back HIV/AIDS support meeting EACH Monday, 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Avenue.

•11•

Children's Easter Crafts Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747

•11•

Care Time For care Givers Support Meeting. Each Tuesday, &;)) - 9:00. Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave.. 756-9202

•12•

Friends, HIV+ men and women assemble 10:00 - 2:00 p.m. EACH Wednesday. Our Cousin's House.1023 Dill Ave. 404-756-9202

•14•

Celine Hardware signs Love Forsaken, a black romance novel. 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore.

•15•

Children's Easter Egg Hunt. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore. 261-7747
19 Dr. Yvonne Thornton signs The Ditch Diggers Daughter. 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. Truth Bookstore

•21•

Brother Erriel signs Maasa and Beyond. 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. Truth Bookstore

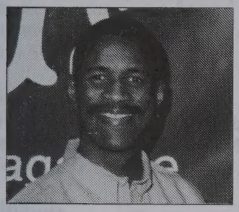
•25•

Children's Earth day Craft Hour. 11:00 a.m. Barnes and Noble Bookstore.

•30•

Last day to visit the Atlanta College of Art's "A Family affair; Sexuality and the American Family". Photographs and Text explores alternative family life-styles. ACA Gallery, M-S 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Herbert Alexander has been named operations manager for Atlanta Lesbian and Gay Pride Committee. This year, African-American attendance is expected to be at an all time high as we march "from silence to celebration." Congratulations Hubert!

"...I am not of that sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low down dirty deal. No, I do not weep at the world. I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife." Zora Neale Hurston

Oyster Knife Publishing presents A CALL FOR POETRY by MEN OF AFRIKAN DESCENT (Latino, Carribean, U.S. Born). We seek poems that cry, laugh, mourn and worship. We seek poems that celebrate those matters closest to their hearts. All submissions should be typed, in English, and mailed to: P.O. Box 2726, Atlanta, Georgia, 30301, by June 15, 1995.

New York City's Lois Porter received the Annual 4 Seasons Award last month for her outstanding contributions to the black lesbian / gay social community. Ms. Porter founded Les' Amies 32 years ago. The group is one of the oldest known social organizations for black lesbians. She started with twelve hospital workers, who sold dinners to raise money for their affairs, Some of their first fun filled events took place at an upstate New York Resort, Johnson's Lake and also at Hemlock Farm. The year was 1963 and after all this time, Les' Amies is still going strong! Their next event takes place in Brooklyn's Marc Ballroom on April 29, 1995. To Lois Porter, who is "70-something" this year, Venus Magazine sends congratulations and a hearty "YOU GO GIRL!"

Bess Knowings of Simplicity Attraction of New York also received a 4 Seasons Award for outstanding contributions. Bess is known as the "networking Queen" of the black lesbian social community. Congratulations Bess, and thanks for keeping us plugged in!

ZAMI, Atlanta's premiere African-American lesbian organization is seeking submissions for possible inclusion in an anthology of coming out stories written by African-American lesbians. We welcome letters, journal entries, poetry and personal essays. Please send submissions to Mary Anne Adams at, P.O. Box 2502, Decatur, Georgia, 30331.

NATIONAL EVENTS

APRIL

1

D.C.
Phatt Baby Productions "Spring Has Sprung" Fashion Show & Dance. Days Inn, 2700 New York Ave., N.E. 10 - 3 a.m.. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $12. / $15.. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

2

D.C.
Mawava Social Club's Annual "April Fool Madness". Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 4 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, buffet, cash bar, dancing. $10. - $12.

8

New York
Annual Black and Gold Affair, by Simplicity Attractions of New York. Marc Ballroom. 27 Union Sq., West, NYC. Entertainment, open bar, buffet, after 5 wear. $30. Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073

9

D.C.
Lady B. Productions' Annual Show. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 6 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. $5. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

Atlanta
African-American Family Reunion of Gays and Lesbians (AFROGAL) presents the first annual AFROGAL Pageant. Tribute to the 70's. Doors open at 9 p.m. $5. adv. / $7. door. Contact Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467

14

New York
"The Sisters" ski weekend, Mount Laurel Resort. Whitewater, Pa. (Poconos). For more info call Dawn Soto. (718) 5198593, or Barbara Rooks (718) 429-6726

15

Atlanta
Our Cousin's House Annual Easter Basket Raffle. Midnite, Loretta's, 3rd & Spring St. (404) 874-8125

16

D.C.
An Easter Sunday Extravaganza with Krystal Snow. Brass Rail, 476 K St., N.W. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, buffet, cash bar. $6. Woo-Woo (202) 554-0456

Atlanta
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents a "post" Freaknic Dance at Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

27

Atlanta
Women's Day Camp Weekend. April 27 - 29, 1995, at The River's Edge. Private membership only campground. (706) 213-8081

28

Atlanta
Sisters of Thirty-Something Special present their "Single to Mingle" gathering. Club Oxygen. 4 - 10 p.m. (404) 997-6240

New York
Elaine and Company presents "An Oldies but Goodies Party!" Contact Elaine at (212) 242-8610, or Barbara (212) 741-3467. $20. M.L.K. Labor Center, 310 West 43 St., (off 8th Ave.) NYC

29

New York
Les' Amies, one of New York's oldest black lesbian social groups, will present its annual affair. 10 - 3 a.m. at the Marc Ballroom. Entertainment, dancing, cash bar. Contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

MAY

6

Baltimore
Simplicity Attraction's Annual Help Them Buffet. Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins St., 5 p.m. - 12 a.m. Entertainment, dancing, BYOL, munchies, free set-ups. Attire - casual. Tickets $15. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

17

Atlanta
"I Remember Venus" ...friends of Venus Landin meet at Kalo's Coffee House, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open Mic, readings and songs. Come share your memories. (404) 325-3733. No Cover, any donations accepted will benefit the Lamda Community Center.

20

Baltimore
Cricket and Beverly's White Affair. Dundalk Union Hall. 9 p.m. - 2 a.m. Dancing, buffet, free beer & wine, BYOL. Tickets $20. Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167

MEMORIAL DAY 26 WEEKEND !!

D.C.
Woo-Babi & Carter Associates' Weekend Wet Party. Days Inn, 2700 N.Y. Ave., N.E. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m., bikini fashion show, mini-show, exotic dancers, cash bar, lavish buffet, dancing. $12. adv., $15. door.

27

Los Angeles
At the Beach... ATB presents its National Kickoff Celebration! Watch for details! (213) 969-1619
Atlanta
Sisters of 30-Something Special presents Comfort Zone Productions, a NYC theater troupe, in "The Personals". Two shows; 4 p.m. matinee, 8 p.m. evening. West End Performing Arts Center. $12. adv. / $15. door. Call (404) 804-8381
Atlanta
Hospitality Atlanta presents its annual Memorial day Party. Doors open at 10 p.m. (404) 627-1630

28

Atlanta
Hospitality Atlanta returns to Red Top Mountain for the 4th annual Memorial Day Picnic Celebration on beautiful Lake Alatoona; one hour north of the city. 11 a.m. til dusk! Music, dancing, fun and frolic. Vendors call (404) 627-1630

Atlanta
Venus Magazine presents the 1st Annual **Memorial Day Salute to the Black Arts Community.** Odella's 1231 W. Peachtree St. Doors open at 9 p.m. Festive attire. Meet and greet some of our nation's finest! Music, dancing, buffet, live show case, jazz saxophonist, obu, on the patio. $10. The following tickets / stubs / 2-for-1! Jelly's Last Jam, Sophisticated Ladies, The Personals, The Dance Theater of Harlem, Talking Bones, Mississippi Delta, Blues for an Alabama Sky, Raisin,A Lady and A Woman, Sensuality, and Servant of the People.

D.C.
Marcking Productions Black Gay Pride Celebration. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., S.E. 9 p.m. - 3 a.m. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar, $5.
Atlanta
WOMANWRITES '95: 17th annual conference for lesbian writers. May 28 - June 4th. One hour south of the city. Workshops, readings, meals, dormitory sleeping, lake. $70. - $100. Send SASE by May 15th! Silver Circle, Rt. 5, Box 100, Holly Springs, MS 38635 or contact Maree at (502) 966-2420

JUNE

8

New York
Simplicity Attractions of N.Y. presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS., June 8-11, Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swim suit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings. (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701
Atlanta
"AFROGAL" present the 1st Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of gays and lesbians. Clarion Hotel, June 8 - 11. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, (404) 370-1392

TIME TO TRAVEL

Invites You To

Washington, DC
BLACK GAY PRIDE
WEEKEND
'95

WHEN: FRIDAY, MAY 26TH THRU MONDAY MAY 29TH

WHAT: PACKAGE INCLUDES RT AIR FARE FROM ATLANTA TO WASHINGTON NATIONAL ON CONTINENTAL AIRLINES, 3 NIGHTS HOTEL ACCOMADATIONS AND TAXES AT THE EMBASSY ROW HOTEL & REDUCED RATES AT ALAMO RENT-A-CAR

PRICE: $299 DBL.

DEPOSIT: MARCH 24TH - $100
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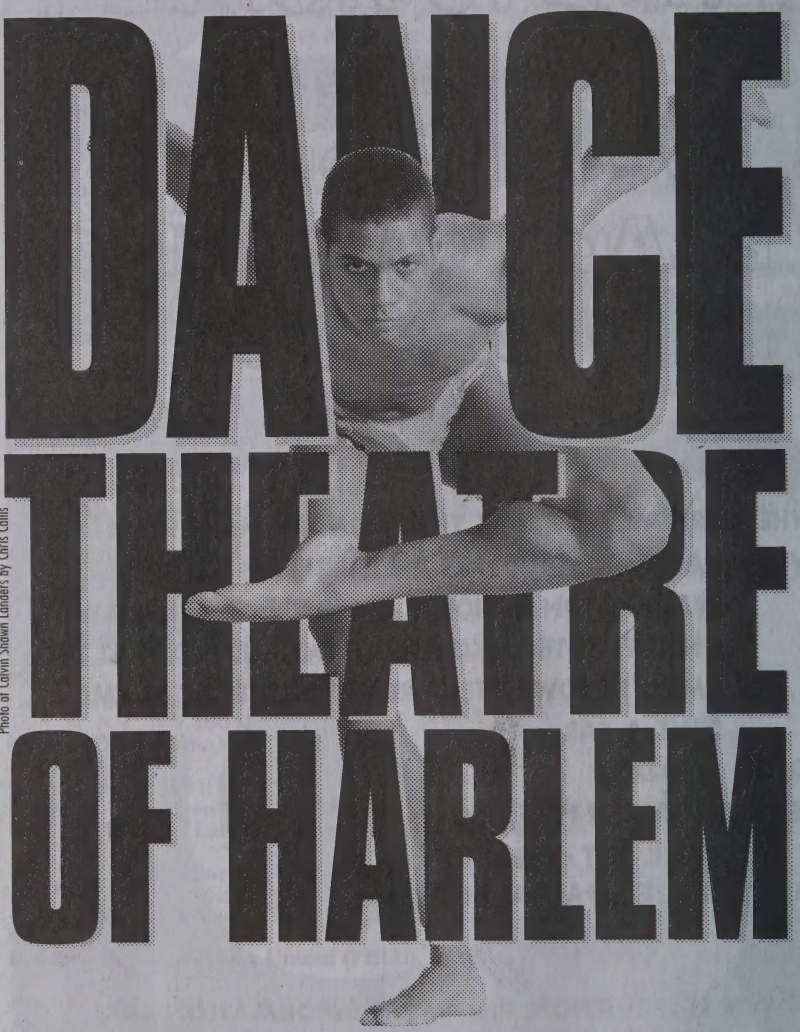

Photo of Calvin Shawn Landers by Chris Callis

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